

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
AND THE JEWS
ARGENTINA, 1933-1945

GRACIELA BEN-DROR

**The Catholic Church and the Jews
Argentina, 1933–1945**

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Graciela Ben-Dror

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To my family,

Víctor, Guy and Shirley, Amos and Lilach, Hagit, Doron and Romee

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Foreword

The twelve and a half years of the Nazi era in Europe (January 1933–May 1945) were also a turbulent period in Argentina’s history: the “infamous decade” (1933–1943) of a lame democracy, followed by two and a half years of rule by a military-junta. The Catholic Church, whose dominance in Argentine political life had been curtailed during the previous fifty years, regained an enormous share of its bygone authority. This period also saw the upsurge of a large movement of Catholic-oriented nationalism, the dominant part of which was deeply antisemitic.

Five dimensions consequently converge: the attitude of the hierarchy of the Argentine Church towards the Holocaust in Europe, its attitude toward the local Jewish community and particularly, toward its increase through immigration, the attitudes of some lower-ranking parish priests to the Jews and the Holocaust, the support and official recognition gained by nationalist antisemites from both the hierarchy and the rank-and-file clergy, and the reflection Vatican policies toward the Jews during the Nazi era in the Argentinean Church’s attitudes, as compared with the Church in other places.

In this last context, one should not lose sight of the fact that the Catholic International Eucharistic Congress, which convened in Buenos Aires in October 1934—undoubtedly a watershed in the history of the position of the Church in Argentina—was headed by the Vatican Secretary of State, Eugenio Pacelli, who in 1939 was elected Pope Pius XII. A strong and personal acquaintance thus linked the Argentine Church hierarchy with the Holy See.

The author of this study, Uruguayan-born Dr. Graciela Ben-Dror, belonged to a pioneer youth movement, and since her immigration to Israel has been a member of a kibbutz. Undertaking her research at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem—some distance from her South American origins—provided the advantage of a scholarly detachment from the subject. She has succeeded in showing the variety of attitudes which prevailed in the Argentine Church at the most critical period of twentieth-century Jewish history.

*Haim Avni
Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

Acknowledgments

The idea of writing this book developed in one of the beautiful coffee bars of Buenos Aires after the end of the military dictatorship in the mid-1980s. From a conversation with Prof. Haim Avni arose the idea of writing about the Catholic Church and the Jews in Argentina, a subject that had been taboo. The archives of the Catholic Church were not open to researchers, and until then, the knowledge of the Church and the Jews was a set of opinions much more based on stereotypes than a product of a systematic research. Therefore—as happens often in life—my research about Catholics and Jews in Argentina resulted more from a coincidence than a premeditated decision. It became a subject hard to put aside, addressing the issue as it developed both during and after the Holocaust period. This volume is based on my Ph.D. dissertation that focused on the Catholic Church, the Holocaust period, and Argentinean society.

First of all I want to thank Prof. Haim Avni for his guidance and helpful comments throughout my research. In addition, I wish to thank a number of Catholic scholars who were very supportive and helped open doors to a wide variety of Church sources. Without a doubt, the positive shift in attitudes toward Jews since the revolutionary “*Nostra Aetate*” document of the Second Vatican Council in 1965 was felt very much in the friendly and helpful stand of Catholic researchers to whom I owe much gratitude. Without their help this research would have been impossible. I want to thank in particular Dr. Nestor Auza, a Catholic historian of the Chruch in Argentina who helped me in my first steps; Dr. Floreal Forni, and Dr. Fortunato Mallimaci for their decisive help in understanding the historical and sociological perspective on the Argentinean Church, and for inviting me to participate in their Oral History seminars. I want to thank them also for their warm and invaluable friendship along the years.

I am also very grateful to various librarians and archivists in Argentina from the Ministry of Exterior, and especially those of Catholic institutions, the Argentine Catholic Action archives and library, the Salesian Congregation, the Catholic Institute for Superior Studies, the *Criteria* collection, and several churches and monasteries that were helpful in finding sources from Buenos Aires area and in the interior. Without their help it

would have been very difficult to get access to primary sources which were often stacked far on the upper shelves of the libraries and archives.

The Holocaust was a familiar topic to me. My parents had the good fortune to emigrate to democratic Uruguay before the Holocaust. Yet I belong to a generation that didn't know their grandparents because they were murdered by the Nazis in Poland. I was led to study the Shoah with Prof. Israel Gutman and Prof. Yehuda Bauer. I want to thank both of them for their inestimable contribution to the knowledge of different aspects of the most tragic period in the Jewish history, and their encouragement and personal help at every stage of my research. From Prof. Marcel Dubois I learned much about the philosophy of Christianity, and his personal understanding of the Jewish-Christian dialogue greatly enriched my perspective.

I would also like to thank a number of foundations and institutes, whose financial assistance made this work possible: the Vidal Sasson Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Yad Vashem International Institute for the Study of the Holocaust, the Golda Meir Foundation which awarded a prize for a outstanding research, and the Havatzelet Foundation of the Kibbutz Artzi Movement.

A number of individuals also helped in the final stages of the book: I want to thank especially Prof. David Bankier, whose intelligent suggestions and good will were of great assistance in turning my doctoral dissertation into a book. It was also a great honor to me to be able to work with Alifa Saadya, the editor of this English version, whose good will, important intellectual remarks, and professional work contributed greatly to the final result.

During the years of research I spent much time in Buenos Aires and Jerusalem, and I am very grateful to my cousins Pola Aizenberg and Gladys and Dicky Fisher for their hospitality.

And last, but assuredly not least, I want to thank my dear family: my husband Víctor, who was the first critical reader of the manuscript, for his unconditional help and support, and to our children, Guy, Amos, and Hagit for the tolerance and good will they always showed during the years of this research.

Graciela Ben-Dror

Introduction

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ARGENTINA AND THE JEWS

Historical research regards the Holocaust of European Jewry as a unique event of special significance, not for the Jewish people alone, even though they were the primary victims of the Holocaust and were condemned to annihilation. The universal nature of the Holocaust rests, among other things, on the involvement of many other nations in some way, whether they admit it or not. Historians distinguish three categories of actors in the setting of the events: perpetrators, victims, and bystanders.¹ In this respect the Catholic Church of Argentina during the period of the Holocaust has not so far been investigated. Yet its position merits study as a specific religious group owing allegiance to the Vatican that also belonged to the bystander category.

The South American continent contains one of the largest concentrations of Roman Catholics in the world, and Argentina has an especially large Catholic community. An attempt to understand any facet of Argentinean history must consider the Church as a contemporary institution bearing weighty historical and social influence. Outside the official Argentinean Church many lay Catholic movements and new elites have developed, each with its own political character. Numerous organizations of an ideological, intellectual, social, and economic character flourish, alongside charities and educational institutions inspired by Catholicism.² No historian interested in Argentine society can ignore the Roman Catholic factor, with its potential for change and as a frame of reference. The Catholic Church exerts enormous public impact. While religious faith cannot be quantified, its omnipresent influence has the potential to divide the world and to define frontiers.³

During the 1930s and 1940s the concept of *Argentinidad* became current among Argentine Catholics. This concept held that Argentine national identity and Catholic religious identity were one, and that the Church was the spiritual foundation on which society and state should stand so as to establish “Catholic Argentina.”⁴ Hence, Argentina’s challenge to researchers may be formulated as a question: How did the circumstances outlined above affect

the attitude of the Catholic Church towards Judaism and the Jewish people during that crucial period of their history, the Holocaust?

Many aspects of the situation in Argentina of the 1930s and 1940s have been studied including the nature of the Catholic Church in the relevant years, the official Argentinean policy on Jewish immigration, and the postures of the various nationalist streams. The “Nationalist Movement” and the Argentine radical Right have been a central topic of historical research in recent decades. Antisemitism is noted as one of the components of the Nationalist Movement’s ideology, which merged with its characteristic anti-liberal, anti-democratic, anti-communist posture.

In none of this literature is there more than a few isolated pages devoted to antisemitism within the movement. However, all writers on the ideology and political attitudes of the highly diversified nationalist Right in Argentina agree that its ideological inspiration came from Europe, and the various groups adopted outlooks that were partly Hispanic, partly Fascist, and partly Nazi. In several areas the consensus among them was absolute, and most defined themselves as Catholic. Drawing on the anti-Jewish tradition found in both in Christianity and the writings of the European Right, they perceived Jews as dangerous foreigners whose entry into Argentina should be stopped.

Researchers could scarcely ignore the antisemitic dimension entirely since it appeared in nationalist publications as an obsessive theme; but to date, no study has concentrated on this particular aspect. Studies on the Church and its place in Argentina, or works about Juan Domingo Perón devote only a few lines to well-known antisemitic clerics who wrote books and published articles in the nationalist and Catholic press vilifying the Jews. Thus, the present volume is the first systematic study on the Argentinean Church in relation to Jews and Judaism.⁵

The documented fact that from the 1930s onwards, well-known intellectuals in Argentina included radical antisemitic priests provides insufficient grounds to assert that the Church in Argentina as an institution was antisemitic. One must determine whether in their antisemitism these few clerics diverged from the official Church position, or whether antisemitism was an accepted norm in an institution that had a strong influence on public opinion. This study also examines the Church leadership as well as the middle and lower level clergy, and explores how the parish religious education system taught about Jews and Judaism in catechism classes. On the social and political level, it analyzes the work of the Catholic clergy and the

laity who were inspired by Church teachings and dedicated to its declared aims as they interpreted them.

This study also attempts to elucidate the wider issue of relations between Christianity and Judaism 1930s and 1940s. This investigation is conducted through the eyes of an integral, powerful Catholic Church in Argentina, an important Catholic country but one with a tradition in which liberal governments had welcomed Jewish immigration. Hence, during the most critical period of modern times for the Jewish people, 1933–1945, the possibility of rescue for some through immigration presumably existed.

My aim is to describe and analyze the attitude of the Argentinean Catholic Church to Jews, Judaism, and antisemitism in general, as well as specifically in Argentina; and to the new anti-Christian challenge coming from Europe, namely, the rise of Nazism, and the Holocaust. Substantial documentation exists that shows the stance of the Argentine bishops, Catholic intellectuals representing the Church, parish priests, and important laymen.

The Catholic Church in Argentina was not, of course, an isolated institution. It was part of the wider Catholic world, with the Vatican as its institutional and spiritual center. Traditional Catholic messages about the Jews, inspired by ancient religious tensions, were ambivalent or hostile. To these images were added ideological, racist, political, and religious motifs drawn from modern antisemitism, including the accusation that a worldwide Jewish conspiracy sought to rule the world.

Also in the background are questions about the extent to which relations between the Argentinean Church and the Vatican influenced the attitude of the local Church to Judaism and the Jews. Did the Vatican dictate policy, or did the Argentine Church enjoy some autonomy on the Jewish question?

Pope Pius XI's opposition to pagan racism was made known in his encyclical on the situation of the Church in Germany, *Mit brennender Sorge*, read throughout the Catholic world in March 1937. Some historians have taken for granted that the pope intended a condemnation of antisemitism as well. One may ask, however, if Catholic believers in Argentina perceived it as a complete condemnation of racism, including antisemitism, and whether the papal document served to counteract the spread of antisemitic motifs by priests and laymen. It was, in fact, insufficient, and the pope himself understood this, for in 1938 he drafted a new encyclical on racism, antisemitism, and the persecution of the Jews of Germany entitled *Humani Generis Unitas*, which remained unpublished.⁶

The content of this unpublished document and the possibility that it might have stirred a rescue effort are subject to further historical discussion. The very fact that Pius XI saw the necessity of preparing such an encyclical is the best argument that he intended to make a stand against antisemitism as part of his condemnation of racism. Unfortunately, for Catholic believers in those days the connection was not always evident. Speeches and writings of Argentinean Catholics provide many examples of racial motifs, despite papal opposition.

The attitude to the Holocaust of Pope Pius XII, who headed the Holy See from March 1939, is also important for our discussion because it was obviously the model to be followed by national Catholic churches during those years.

In the latter half of the 1930s, as the situation of the Jews in Germany grew ever more desperate, so did their need to find safe havens. The impact of events in Nazi Germany and in Europe during World War II was keenly felt in Argentina. In confronting the challenges that arose, a Catholic ideology—known as “Integral Catholicism”—developed that claimed to encompass all spheres of life, and to offer guidance for Catholic believers in every aspect of their spiritual and physical needs. This Catholic ideology was specially hostile towards Jews as part of its anti-pluralist, anti-liberal, and anti-communist approach, for Jews were identified with liberalism and communism, and hence seen as a threat to the achievement of Catholic ideals.⁷

Another area of concern was the place of the Church within the State. The Catholic Church had always been active in public life, as part of the prophetic imperative to create a moral and Christian society. It could not forsake its involvement in secular and political life especially in the years when it was challenged by regimes promoting ideologies diametrically opposed to its own.

In the opinion of the Catholic sociologist Ivan Vallier, who studied the Church in Latin America in times of dynamic change and crisis, the source of the power and influence of the Church hierarchy is closely linked with the need of the political regime for legitimization. To define the concept of “influence” Vallier likened it to the ability of the individual (person, group, state) to stimulate a sense of obligation and loyalty, to mobilize sufficient means, and to generate sufficient support to enable the agent of the influence to dictate his desires, and thus to change a given situation.⁸

In the years of change and crisis covered in this study, the official Catholic Church in Argentina succeeded in arousing feelings of obligation and loyalty not only among its committed laity, but also among nominal, “cultural” Catholics. The more the regime felt the need for legitimization, the greater was the potential Church influence on society as a whole. The Church’s ability to exercise influence was a function of its authority, consisting of its coercive hierarchical power; general identification with it; and its traditional legitimacy and moral authority.⁹

In Vallier’s opinion, the clerical elite, “an identifiable group, which itself is an integral part of the whole, was made up of people who had the ability to become an influential factor dominating processes within a certain system and its relations with the environment.”¹⁰ He believes that it is not sufficient to examine the clerical elite’s influence and authority with the public and the cardinals, bishops, and other higher clergy. The elite’s effect on the lower clergy and laymen, springing from its members’ ideological positions, personal characteristics, individual charisma, and grip on key positions, has to be studied as well.¹¹

Research conducted according to these criteria faces a major methodological problem, namely identification of the channels through which Church messages about the Jews were propagated. Who were the flag-bearers who molded public opinion on this issue? What messages were being given by the bishops in their official documents and letters to the Catholic masses? The Church’s was not homogeneous, so its currents, internal contradictions, and conflicts, which created their own dynamics, have also to be examined.¹²

To understand the attitude of the Argentine Catholic Church to Judaism and the Jews during the Holocaust period, one must take into account the messages that had accumulated down the generations in the Church, their application in relation to links between the local churches with the Vatican; and all this in the setting of the internal socio-political fabric of the state and the spirit of the times.¹³

As noted above, during the 1930s and 1940s certain priests and laymen were outstanding in their radical antisemitism as seen in their published writings. One of the central aims of this study is to ascertain whether the outlook of these intellectuals expressed the norms of the Church in Argentina or deviated from them. In doing so, we cannot separate the content of their works from the channels of dissemination. It is also essential to examine the human factor, which influenced ideological developments and historical

events during the period under discussion. We must take note of the proximity of the antisemitic intellectual circles to the Church hierarchy in Argentina and the extent to which they blended with the regime and wielded influence within it.

This is the context of Section One of the study. Different historical situations, national traditions, dynamics of events, and personal and institutional influences produced a varied picture of reactions to the Jews in the Catholic churches of different countries in those years. One important issue was that of support, or lack of it, among Catholics toward immigration of Jews seeking asylum. This can be examined in light of the realization of Catholic aspirations in the military coup of 1943.

Section Two will provide an analysis of the special attitude of the Argentinean Church to the rise of Nazism as a new and anti-Christian force in Europe. The objective is to observe the reactions of the Church and of Catholics to racist ideology, the Nazi occupation of Europe, and the subsequent suffering and persecution of Jews until news of the genocide under the Nazi regime began to reach Argentina from 1942 onwards.

While this study is not concerned specifically with relations between the Church and the State, one must note the growing strength of the Church in Argentina during the 1930s, and the question of whether the potential for influence was exploited by the Catholic Church in Argentina, or whether it remained passive. Specifically, we ask, did the Church adopt a stance on Jewish immigration to Argentina as a humanitarian act of rescue, or not?

THE JEWISH PRESENCE IN ARGENTINA

Jews represent an important and well-organized minority in Argentina, with communal roots stretching back to the mid-19th century, when the state sought to attract hardworking immigrants from Europe and elsewhere in order to develop the country.

The Beginning of Jewish Settlement in Argentina

Jewish settlement in Argentina became possible owing to the immigration policy adopted by the Argentine government in the second half of the 19th century. The country's vast expanses were sparsely populated, and although Argentina had gained independence in 1810, only in 1853 was a liberal constitution promulgated that, among other things, actively encouraged

immigration and settlement in its territory. Jews merged into this welcome process, albeit at a slower rate and at a somewhat later period.

From the mid-19th century an oligarchic republic of landowners arose who saw as their primary mission the fostering of immigration from Europe under the slogan “Civilizar es poblar” (To civilize means to populate).¹⁴ Argentine constitution assured freedom of religion, ritual, and expression for all; in addition, opportunities were opened for work and trade, and movement was unrestricted for citizens and residents alike.

In 1876, the Immigration and Settlement Law was passed, fraught with the struggle between liberals and conservative Catholic circles which sought to preserve the Catholic character of the state. The law defined the rights of immigrants, who were in turn expected to be industrious and moral citizens. The law provided for the allocation of funds for settlement and the installation of suitable machinery.¹⁵ In addition, the State Education Law of 1884 provided for a secular educational system, and the Population Registry Law of 1888 removed from the Church’s purview the registration of births, marriages, and deaths.

Jewish immigration had begun before these legal changes took place. The first Jewish arrivals were a few individuals from western Europe, who founded the first *minyan* (a quorum of ten men for communal prayer) in 1862, which became the *Congregación Israelita de la República Argentina* (CIRA), the Jewish Congregation of the Argentine Republic.¹⁶

The 1881 pogroms in Russia set in motion a surge of mass migration in which about a million and a half Jews headed for the United States before the First World War, and another 70,000 settled in Argentina. In 1889, a great wave of Jewish migration began flowing to Argentina, stimulated by the reorganization of the country’s immigration agencies in Europe. The agents went directly to the Jewish street, and the subject was discussed in the Jewish press. The first group assembled in Europe by the immigration agents consisted of 820 Jews from Kaminitz-Podolsk in western Ukraine, who sailed for Argentina on the *Weser*.¹⁷

At that time, too, Baron Maurice de Hirsch was seeking far-reaching solutions for the migration of Jews from eastern Europe. He saw Argentina as a highly suitable destination because of the possibility of settling groups on large tracts of land, and the absence of an established Jewish community. Had there been such in Argentina, it might have feared that mass immigration from Russia would negatively affect its privileges, as had happened in other western states. The sums of money invested in Baron de Hirsch’s settlement

project—the Jewish Colonization Association, or ICA—exceeded those put into any other public Jewish enterprise till then. At first it was considered an alternative to Jewish migration to Palestine, and was intended to settle productively hundreds of thousands of Jewish families from eastern Europe. For a variety of reasons, it did not fulfill the hopes placed in it. Altogether, no more than 35,000 Jews worked on the agricultural colonies for longer or shorter periods, and this number represented less than a third of the entire Jewish population in the state, which in 1914 numbered 115,600.¹⁸

In the 1890s, concurrent with the ICA program, urban immigration also increased. This was not an organized migration, and those choosing urban life received no institutional support. Urban immigrants tended to be from countries of the Ottoman empire, and were drawn to Argentina because of the Spanish language and the similar cultural background. Non-Ashkenazi Jews became absorbed in Argentina in commerce, but their overall number was about one tenth of the Ashkenazi Jews.¹⁹ Urban Jewish immigrants worked as laborers, craftsmen, and peddlers. Argentina was not considered an attractive country; its image was that of an agricultural economy, lacking industry, and in which absorption was fraught with hardships.

Some sought to curb immigration. In Argentina, as in the United States, there was a fear of the spread of communism, which led to the eruption of the events of the “Tragic Week” in January 1919, when a workers’ demonstration was suppressed by force. In consequence, a general strike was called in the capital Buenos Aires, which spread to the cities of the interior. The government resolved to use the army to break the strike, and the armed forces were joined by a posse of “patriotic” citizens. They entered the quarters of the “Russians” (meaning the Jews), struck down residents indiscriminately, and destroyed public and private property, social clubs, and libraries.

During the First World War, there was a demand to limit immigration, and in the 1920s, Argentinean consuls abroad were instructed to issue entry permits only to “suitable” immigrants, primarily farmers.²⁰ Previous opportunities for unlimited Jewish immigration had not been fully exploited by those in charge of settlement nor by those who assisted migration in a Jewish framework.

A military coup in 1930 put an end to the democratic-populist regime. In 1932 the gates of Argentina were closed to free immigration by legislation intended to select farmers and those with relatives already in the country who

would assume responsibility for the newcomer. The other way by which Jews entered the country after the closure of the gates was illegal entry.²¹

In sum, the infrastructure that still exists of Jewish settlement in Argentina began with isolated individuals who arrived after the pogroms of the 1880s in Russia, along with a handful of Jews from Morocco. In the last decade of the 19th century until the First World War, immigration swelled, and was renewed in the decade following the war. The great majority of immigrants were Jews from eastern Europe, with a small number of Jews from the Ottoman empire. After World War I, with the restrictions on immigration to the United States, the bid to enter Argentina intensified, especially by Jews from Poland. From 1930, immigration slowed as a result of new restrictive legislation, and was halted entirely in 1938. Despite this, some 30,000 Jews managed to enter Argentina, mostly from eastern and central Europe, during the Holocaust.

Social Stratification in Jewish Settlement

The first Jewish immigrants, like other immigrants, merged into three strata of society: the proletariat, middle class, and agricultural workers. Among city dwellers, a process began in which the proletariat and lower middle class gradually moved up to the middle and upper-middle classes throughout the years covered by this study. At first, the immigrants engaged in crafts, as paid workers, and as peddlers selling goods on credit, and not solely in Jewish-owned concerns. Before the First World War they worked in a wide range of jobs in workshops, various businesses, and in state-owned development operations.

Peddlers played a significant part in the local economy. Through sales on credit, they made it possible for those of limited means to acquire goods. Another area of occupational development was the free professions—medicine, law, engineering, and so on. By the 1930s, the Jewish professional class numbered several thousand people. In that decade, Jews were increasingly becoming plant owners and merchants, and the ranks of the free professionals were increasing.²²

As mentioned previously, the Jews who engaged in agriculture entered Argentina in the framework of Baron de Hirsch's settlement project, although this sector never accounted for more than one-fifth of the Jewish population in the country. In 1925, its numbers peaked at 33,135 out of 162,000 Jews in Argentina. Their influence, however, exceeded their numerical strength. They enjoyed a Jewish educational network and cultural and religious institutions,

and they served as a forum for public and party campaigns in the Jewish settlement. The human turnover in the agricultural sector, which was one of its characteristic features, made it a way station for Jewish immigrants who subsequently contributed to the creation of the urban Jewish settlement. Some contend that the spiritual charge and the habit of public activity that was taken later into the urban setting by those who began in the agricultural settlements exerted a positive influence on the organization and nature of the Jewish city life.²³

In 1934, the Jewish population of Argentina numbered just less than a quarter of a million people, residing in 800 settlements. From the start of the 20th century, over half of Jewish settlement had concentrated in the capital, Buenos Aires, and its suburbs.

Jewish Communal Organizations

The Jewish immigrants, like others, organized various frameworks to meet the need for mutual aid, welfare, and social, educational, and cultural activity, many of which are still in existence.²⁴ These voluntary associations were crucial, for the state did not provide any services in certain areas, such as Jewish religious education, or ritual requirements, such as burial.

From the start, the Jewish community was organized on a congregational basis. Sephardi Jews from Morocco formed the Congregación Israelita Latina (Latin Jewish Congregation) in 1891. Other congregations soon arose, based on its members' place of origin, such as Aleppo and Damascus, Turkey, and the Balkan countries. Because of differences in background, outlook, and above all, language, the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities were quite separate from one another, cooperating only in times of crisis or on special occasions. Before 1935, even Zionist activity was segregated. In that year, however, an umbrella organization, the Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (Delegation of Argentine Jewish Associations, DAIA), was founded, and as a result, the ties between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews became stronger.²⁵

Although the Ashkenazi urban Jews did found synagogues, the services offered and the status of these synagogues were marginal in Argentina's Jewish society. The waves of immigrants from Europe brought with them the secular spirit prevalent in European Jewish communities, including a revolt against tradition and an anti-religious ideology.²⁶ Moreover, the Jewish newcomers were influenced by the atmosphere of the society into which they were absorbed. An air of secularism reigned, indifferent to religion, and at

times even opposed to it, as in the case of the liberals who had actively fought the Catholics since the end of the 19th century. Secularism was strong among the proletariat and lower middle class. For Jews, who on their arrival in Buenos Aires became part of these classes, it was easy to shed the burden of religious observance.

The Ashkenazi community provided welfare and financial assistance through *Landsmanschaftn* (associations of immigrants who had come from the same city or *shtetl* [small town] in Eastern Europe); and even secular Jews desired the services of the *Jevra [Hevra] Kadisha* (burial society). Other organizations were set up to promote cultural activities for both Spanish and Yiddish speakers, and there were political associations and their associated educational institutions.

Until the 1890s, the only Jewish organization was the CIRA, concerned with the synagogue, education, and welfare, and it continued to be the major religious institution of Jews originating in Europe. In 1894, the Ashkenazi *Hevra Kadisha* was founded, which in 1949 became the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) (Jewish Mutual Association of Argentina) or the Ashkenazi Community of Buenos Aires. In 1896, the *Unión Obrera Israelita* (Jewish Workers' Union) was founded. Also known as *Bikur Jolim* (Hebrew, lit., visiting the sick), it set up a clinic; followed in 1900 by the founding of the *Ezra Sociedad de Beneficencia* (Ezra Benevolent Society), which built a Jewish hospital. In 1916, the *Liga Argentina Israelita contra la Tuberculosis* (Argentine Jewish Anti-Tuberculosis League) was established. Other organizations emerged in that period, such as the *Sociedad de Socorros de Damas Israelitas* (Jewish Women's Assistance Society) in 1908; a home for the elderly was set up in 1915; and somewhat later, an orphanage was founded.

Institutions were established during the First World War to aid the war wounded. In the postwar period, organizations were set up to support new immigrants, some of which operated with the assistance of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (known simply as the Joint, the major North American Jewish philanthropic organization). One such was the Asociación Filantrópica Israelita (Jewish Philanthropic Society). The most important organization for helping immigrants was the *Sociedad Protectora del Inmigrante Israelita* (SOPROMITIS: Society for the Protection of Jewish Immigrants), which assisted in bringing Jewish families to Argentina from Europe, arranged Spanish lessons for them, and was active in their absorption into the country. There were also institutions for economic aid, organized as

cooperatives, that advanced loans to immigrants. Other bodies provided meals for the poor in communal kitchens. All the organizations were funded by subscriptions and donations from thousands of members and supporters in the capital, in provincial towns, and in the agricultural colonies.²⁷

Religiously observant Orthodox Jews from the various communities built *mikvaot* (ritual baths), provided kosher meat, and set up religious schools.²⁸

The Zionist movement in Argentina began to organize as early as 1897, following the first Zionist Congress. In time, ideologically distinct Zionist parties were formed, which led to tensions within the movement rose, along with a desire among some to penetrate and mold the Jewish settlement institutions. Leftist non-Zionists also tried to infiltrate the communal bodies and influence their policies. The most powerful Zionist parties active in Argentina were the Zionist Federation, which began as an umbrella organization but later became the General Zionist party; and the Poalei Zion party. These two parties began a process of cooperation in 1935. The World Zionist Organization saw the Argentinean Zionist movement as little more than a source of funding, but in fact the central Zionist establishment occupied a pivotal position in local Jewish communal organization and in representing the community abroad.²⁹

CONCLUSION

The Roman Catholic Church is, by definition, a “single, universal, apostolic and Roman” institution with its center at the Vatican. Hence, the Church in Argentina is an integral part of a hierarchical structure, fully in union with Rome on matters of doctrine. This means that the position taken by the Catholic Church in Argentina as regards to the Jewish question, among others, must be analyzed against the background of the positions taken by the Vatican in the period leading up to, and during, World War II.³⁰

Important research and the release of official documents on this subject have appeared during the last decades, and controversy over the role of the popes and the Vatican remains. Pope Pius XI’s draft encyclical, *Humani generis unitas*, written in 1938, in which he spoke out against antisemitism, was published in 1995. New research by Pierre Blét was published at the end of 1997, covering all published Vatican documents. The latest document of the Vatican’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, with an introductory letter by Pope John Paul II, “We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah,” of March 16, 1998, also mentions the attitude of Pope Pius XII

during the Holocaust and takes a stance on that issue. In his book, *Hitler's Pope: Pius XII and Antisemitism*, John Cornwell analyzed several aspects of Pius XII's behavior toward Jews during World War II, putting considerable emphasis on his Italic policy toward the Jews. He was also the first historian to attempt to understand the underlying motivation of papal policies with antisemitism in mind, and not only as political and diplomatic strategy.³¹

In the war years, the national Catholic churches, whether under Nazi occupation, in Nazi satellite states, or in the free world, evinced a wide variety of reactions on the Jewish issue.³² Hence, not only the fact of occupation or the political and theological strength of those churches influenced their attitude to the fate of the Jews of Europe. An additional factor was the specific humanitarian posture or antisemitic attitude within the Church apparatus and the cultural environment that prevailed in each country.

This research aims to contribute to the understanding of Catholic relations with the Jews in those critical times. The traditional religious anti-Jewish attitude was not unique to Argentina, but was widespread in many European countries. I wish to analyze how this attitude created an antisemitic image that became a stereotype embedded in popular and elite Christian culture, and to understand its influence on Argentinean society and its policymakers. The other aim of this study is to analyze the reaction of the Church in Argentina to the challenge of Nazi racism. This was a new phenomenon in the ideological landscape of the period, and ran counter to Christian doctrine that all people belong to one human race, created in the image of God, and capable of salvation.

The first four chapters of Section One concentrate on the Argentinean Catholic Church and antisemitic images and messages regarding the Jews and Judaism in general, including the attitude towards Jews in Argentina and towards Jewish immigration. The following six chapters of Section Two deal with the attitude of Argentinean Catholicism to the Second World War, racist ideology, Nazi totalitarianism, and the Holocaust of European Jewry.

NOTES

1. See Yisrael Gutman, *Struggle in Darkness* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University in Jerusalem and Moreshet, 1985), 47.

2. Ivan Vallier, *Catolicismo, Control social y modernización en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu Editores, 1970), 9–36; see also Daniel H. Levine, ed., *Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Clifford Geerts, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter (New York: Free Press, 1964).

3. Vallier, *Catolicismo*, 9–14; see also Émile Poulat, *Église contre Bourgeoisie* (Paris: Casterman, 1977); Floreal Forni, “Catholic Doctrinal and Ideological Differentiation and Modernization in Latin America” (Ph.D. diss. University of Chicago, 1973); T. Luckman, *The Invisible Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

4. On *Argentinidad*, see Fortunato H. Mallimaci, “El Catolicismo argentino desde el Liberalismo Integral a la Hegemonía Militar,” in *500 Años de Cristianismo en Argentina*, ed. M. Cristina Liboreiro, Horacio Brito, Emilio F. Mignone, Fortunato H. Mallimaci, et al (Buenos Aires: CEHILA, Centro Nueva Tierra, 1992), 313–65.

5. Among the studies about immigration policy, see, e.g., Haim Avni, *Argentina y la historia de la inmigración judía, 1810–1950* (Jerusalem: AMIA–Magnes Press, 1983); Leonardo Senkman, “Argentina’s Immigration Policy During the Holocaust, 1938–1945,” *Yad Vashem Studies XXI* (1991): 155–88. Among the major studies on the Nationalist Movement, see Marysa Navarro Gerassi, *Los Nacionalistas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Álvarez, 1969), which emphasizes the antisemitic approach of most members of the National Movement; she also mentions well-known antisemitic priests, but has not conducted research on antisemitism in the institutional church itself. Enrique Zuleta Álvarez, in *El Nacionalismo argentino* (Buenos Aires: Itinerarium, 1975), mentions antisemitism in an important branch of the Nationalist Movement, the right-wing Doctrinaires, but he says nothing about the antisemitism of the Republican Nationalist branch, nor does he comment on church antisemitism. Christian Buchrucker, *Nacionalismo y Peronismo. La Argentina en la crisis ideológica mundial (1927–1955)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1987); the author refers to the antisemitic motivation of the Nationalist Movement in a very brief but important review. David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992), notes the antisemitism of the Nationalist Movement, but does not address church antisemitism. Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald Dolkart, *The Argentinean Right* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 1993), analyzes the Right in different periods of the 20th century. There is no book

specifically on the Catholic Church in Argentina and the Jews, although some books dealing with Catholicism mention well-known nationalist and antisemitic priests and their publications as part of their contribution to the Nationalist Movement. See John Kennedy, *Catholicism, Nationalism and Democracy in Argentina* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1958); Loris Zanatta, *Del estado liberal a la nación católica* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 1996). Although the author analyzes the relationship between the Church and the military from 1930 to 1943, there is no special treatment of the Church's approach to the Jews and Judaism; see also Lila M. Caimari, *Perón y la Iglesia católica, religión, estado y sociedad en la Argentina (1943–1955)* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1994). A short section on antisemitism appears in Fortunato Malimacci, "Catholicisme et état militaire en Argentine 1930–1946" (Ph. D. diss., École des Hautes Etudes, Paris, 1988). Leonardo Senkman, ed., *El antisemitismo en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1989) deals with antisemitism in Argentina, but has nothing on the Church and the Jews.

6. Georges Passeelecq and Bernard Sachecky, *L'Encyclique cachée de Pie XI: Une occasion manquée de L'Église face à l'antisémitisme* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1995); it includes the full text of the encyclical, 219–310; see also Michael Marrus, "The Vatican on Racism and Antisemitism, 1938–1939: A New Look at a Might-Have-Been," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 11, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 378–95; Frank J. Coppa, "Pope Pius XI's 'Encyclical' *Humani Generis Unitas* Against Racism and Anti-Semitism and the 'Silence' of Pope Pius XII," *Journal of Church and State* 40, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 775–95.

7. Émile Poulat, *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral* (Paris: Casterman, 1969). Fortunato Mallimaci, "Catholicisme et état militaire en Argentine, 1930–1946" (Ph.D. diss., École des Hautes Études, Paris, 1988).

8. Vallier, *Catolicismo*, 24.

9. *Ibid.*, quoting from Warren G. Bennix, *Changing Organizations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 167–71, 196–98.

10. Ivan Vallier, "Religious Elites: Differentiations and Developments in Roman Catholicism," in *Elites in Latin America*, eds. Seymour M. Lipset and Aldo Solari (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 180–232.

11. Floreal Forni, "Catolicismo y Peronismo" (I) *Unidos*, no. 14 (April 1987): 212–21.

12. Levine, *Religion and Political Conflict*, 15–16.

13. On the nature of different sources of religious antisemitism see, e.g., Kenneth Stow, “Hate of Israel or Love of the Church?” in *Antisemitism through the Ages* (in Hebrew), ed. Shmuel Almog (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1980), 91–111.
14. Juan Bautista Alberdi, *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina* (1st ed., Santiago de Chile: n.p., 1852; Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1974), 238; see also Haim Avni, *The History of Jewish Immigration to Argentina 1810–1950* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press-AMIA, 1983), 30–66.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 18; idem, *Argentinean Jewry* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1972), 7–10; Victor Mirelman, “Jewish Life in Buenos Aires before the East European Immigration (1860–1890),” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (March 1978): 195–207.
17. Avni, *Jewish Immigration*, 67–86.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, 178–85; Victor A. Mirelman, “The Jews in Argentina (1890–1939), Assimilation and Particularism” (Ph.D. diss. Columbia University, New York, 1973), 31–41.
20. Haim Avni, “Official Antisemitism in Argentina?” in *Antisemitism through the Ages*, ed. Shmuel Almog (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1980), 323–42.
21. Avni, *Jewish Immigration*, 278–90, 294–95, 305–6.
22. Avni, *Argentinean Jewry*, 16–18.
23. *Ibid.*, 11, 15.
24. *Ibid.*, 29–31.
25. On the Sephardim in Argentina, see Margalit Bejerano, “El cementerio judío y la unidad comunitaria en la historia de los sefaradim en Buenos Aires,” *Michael* 8 (1983): 24–43.
26. Silvia Schenklewski-Kroll, *The Zionist Movement and the Zionist Parties in Argentina, 1935–1948* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), 34.
27. Avni, *Argentinean Jewry*, 47–65; Efraim Zadoff, *Historia de la educación judía en Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Mila, 1994), 33.
28. Zadoff, *Educación judía*, 34.
29. Schenklewski-Kroll, *Zionist Movement*, 75–120, 121–48, 187–220, 233–95.

30. Pierre Blét, S.J., *Pie XII et la Seconde Guerre mondiale d'après les archives du Vatican* (Paris: Perrin, 1997), 317–26.

31. Passelecq and Suchecky, *L'Encyclique cachée*; Pierre Blét, *Pie XII; We Remember, A Reflexion on the Shoah* (Vatican City: Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, March 16, 1998); John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope* (London: Penguin Books, 1999); Guenter Lewy, "Pius XII, the Jews and the German Catholic Church," in *Betrayal. German Churches and the Holocaust*, edited by Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1999), 129–48. See also Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning. The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002); not based on primary sources, the book does help to keep the subject on the current agenda by sparking discussion.

32. See Kulka and Mendes-Flohr, *Judaism and Christianity*, which contains many articles on the Catholic Church in occupied countries, Nazi satellite countries, and the free world during the Holocaust. For more controversial historiography, see idem, "The Churches and the Jewish People: Actions, Inactions and Reactions During the Nazi Era," in *Comprehending the Holocaust*, eds. Asher Cohen, Yoav Gelber, and Charlotte Wardi (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1992), 125–43; Frank J. Coppa, "The Vatican and the Dictators, between Diplomacy and Morality," in *Catholicism, the State and the European Radical Right, 1919–1945*, eds. Richard J. Wolff and Jorg K. Hoensch (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Harry James Cargas, ed., *Holocaust Scholars Write to the Vatican* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998). Studies on the Church in Latin America are concerned with local Catholicism and its political and social relations; to date no research has been conducted on the Church's relations with the Jews and Judaism during the Holocaust. See, e.g., Daniel H. Levine, *Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); David E. Mutchier, *The Church as a Political Factor in Latin America* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1971); Luckman, *The Invisible Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1967); Roberto Bosca, *La Iglesia nacional peronista. Factor religioso y poder político* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1997); Ignacio Klich, ed., *Sobre nazis y nazismo en la cultura argentina* (Washington: University of Maryland, Hispamérica, 2002); Susana Bianchi, *Catolicismo y Peronismo. Religión y política en la Argentina, 1943–1955* (Buenos Aires: Tandil, 2001); Fernando J. Devoto, *Nacionalismo, fascismo y tradicionalismo en la*

Argentina moderna (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2002); Beatriz Sarlo, *La batalla de las ideas (1943–1973)* (Buenos Aires: Planeta-Ariel, 2001)

Published studies on antisemitic policies in Brazil mention some Catholic attitudes toward the Jews, but do not address Catholicism specifically. See Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, *O Antisemitismo na Era Vargas (1930–1945)* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1988); Jeffrey Lesser, *Welcoming the Undesirables, Brazil and the Jewish Question* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1995), 118–77. Graciela Ben-Dror, “The Catholic Elites in Brazil and their attitudes toward the Jews 1933–1939,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 30 (Jerusalem 2002), 229–70; for a comparative look at the attitude toward the Jews by the Catholic Church in Spain, Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, see Graciela Ben-Dror, *La Iglesia católica ante el Holocausto. España y América Latina* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2003). On Uruguay, *ibid.*, 222–41; 264–69; 271–97; Clara Aldrighi, “La ideología antisemita en el Uruguay. Su contexto católico y conservador,” in *Antisemitismo en Uruguay*, edited by Clara Aldrighi, et al. (Montevideo: Universidad de la República, 2000); Miguel Feldman, *Tiempos difíciles. Inmigrantes judíos en Uruguay* (Montevideo: Universidad de la República, 2002). No specific research on the Catholic position on the Jews in other Latin American countries has been conducted.

Part I

The Catholic Church in Argentina and Antisemitism

CHAPTER 1

The Consolidation of the Catholic Church in Argentina

“Argentina is a country with a rich tradition in many spheres: A tradition of culture, politics and democracy with the deepest Christian Catholic religious tradition....”

Pope John Paul II
(during his visit to Argentina, April 1987)

FROM COLONY TO INDEPENDENCE

Two main themes emerge when examining the consolidation of the Catholic Church in Argentina and its influence on its environment. The first concerns relations between the Church and the state from the Spanish colonial period (1508–1810) through the 1930s. The second traces the confrontation throughout the world between Catholicism and modernity as perceived by the Vatican and European Church circles from the 19th century, and its effects on the situation in Argentina.

The Church aspired to be a dominant influence in the state, and indeed, from 1508 to 1880 its relations with the state were harmonious, the Church being organically integrated into political and social life. In the last decades of the 19th century, however, a gap opened between the liberal regime with its political and economic ideals and the Church as an institution.

Two major elements form the background for understanding the Argentinean Church in the 1930s and 1940s. There is the confrontation between the Holy See and modernism evident in papal documents from the late 19th century onwards. In addition, there is the legacy of the colonial Church and Catholic culture that preceded Argentinean independence in 1816, leading to the identification of “Argentinism” with “Catholicism.” Nationalism and religion evolved and flourished together, but at the same time, liberal ideals prominent at the end of the 19th century also nourished

the nationalist thought of the 1930s and 1940s. Catholic nationalists saw the identification of Catholicism and the state in Argentina as an organic part of a historical process taking place in Latin America as a whole, and Argentina in particular.¹

The legal and organizational structure of the Church in Latin America is rooted in the special historical and religious status of the Catholic kings of Spain, who were granted authority over the Church in their country by Pope Innocent VII in the 15th century. They later claimed to extend their authority universally, to include the Americas, arguing that “the Catholic kings brought the Cross to undiscovered regions....” and hence “the evangelical call reached the furthest ends of the world.” The Spanish kings’ administration of America was thereby officially sanctioned, and the Church became entirely dependent on the state and its rulers.²

In 1810, the developing bourgeoisie in Latin America exploited Spain’s weakened situation and declared the independence of the “United Provinces of Río de la Plata.” The connecting cord with the Spanish motherland was severed by a revolutionary act, which generated a war of independence. Concurrently, commercial ties with the British empire grew stronger.

Following the French Revolution of 1789, the Catholic Church closed itself off from what it perceived as the hostile modern world. The pope and Church hierarchy supported a return to the *ancien régime*—particularly in Europe. In the New World, the situation was rather more complex. The bishops, at Rome’s behest, supported the “legitimacy” of the Spanish monarchical regime. At the same time, large segments of the lower priesthood and the religious orders supported the ideals of the Revolution. Many priests gave active support to Argentina’s struggle for independence, which placed them in an unprecedented position vis-à-vis the Vatican.³

The 1880s Generation

Confrontation between the Church and the state in Argentina arose in the second half of the 19th century and reached a peak from 1880 onwards. At that time, liberals opposed Catholics, with each side struggling violently for its cause. Between 1880 and 1916, under a regime known as the “Oligarchic Republic,” the liberals transformed the country into a modern state. Sociologist Gino Germani enumerates three chief factors that brought about the change: mass immigration, secular education, and new economic policies. The wave of immigration contributed to the Europeanization of Argentina and changed the “race” that inhabited the country. It also produced structural,

social, and economic changes, the foremost being progress in “political culture” owing to the rise of the lower class sectors and the bourgeoisie.⁴

The disintegration of the traditional cultural and religious homogeneity gave rise to two opposing models in Argentina’s political life. The religious and socially conservative model was supported by the Church, while the liberal model aspired to church-state separation and the introduction of secular education. In 1884, the *Ley de Educación Común* (unified education law) no. 1420 was passed. Its opponents called it the “law of secular education,” for the Church lost its primacy in this area, and from then on adopted a stance of active opposition to liberal rule.⁵

The Confrontation between Catholicism and Modernity

The clash between Catholicism and modernity was not unique to Argentina, which was, in fact, was directly influenced by the confrontation in Europe, particularly in Spain and France. In the second half of the 19th century, liberalism and anti-clericalism became part of a general offensive, translated in political and educational terms into a struggle against the hegemony of the Church. The victory of liberals in Argentina acquired tangible expression in the unified education law of 1884, which disallowed compulsory religious instruction. Threatened with loss of its power to influence society through its educational program, the Church—as in European countries such as France, Spain, and Italy—refused to acquiesce quietly to these changes.

It will be helpful to take a look at the process of rejection of, and adaptation to the modern era taken by the Church authorities. Pope Pius IX had reorganized Latin American Catholicism in establishing the Colegio Pío Latino-Americano to train Latin American priests for their struggle against liberalism. In 1864, he published the *Syllabus of Errors* as an appendix to his encyclical, *Quanta Cura*. The *Syllabus* was a list of theological and philosophical errors, and included a wholesale condemnation of modern society and those who attempted to adapt to it, serving as an authoritative definition of Catholic principles, rejecting the French revolution, and 19th-century ideologies such as liberalism, democracy, and socialism. Its influence was lasting and felt worldwide by Catholic believers.

Pope Leo XIII, who succeeded Pius IX in 1878, continued this line of thought, although he stressed its social content. The encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of 1891 serves as an example of a project designed to “re-Christianize society.” Leo XIII was far from liberal, even though his encyclical was lauded for calling for just treatment of the working class. He

feared that unless their condition improved, they would opt for the socialist parties. He referred frequently to the *Syllabus*, stressing the essence of Pius IX's documents.⁶

The centralist policy dated from the First Vatican Council of 1870. At that council, the Pope was declared infallible when speaking *ex cathedra* on matters of faith and morals, and it rejected all popular authority, including liberalism. The dismissal of liberalism led to a split within the Catholic world itself. "Integral Catholicism" rejected all liberal ideals and sought to create a totally Catholic society in which religion, morality, politics, and economics were to operate according to specifically Catholic conceptions. Any division of religion, politics, and morality into separate sectors was the offspring of liberal thought. This thinking was not limited to a few individuals but encompassed the entire hierarchy, reflecting the attitude of the time. At the beginning of the 20th century, under the leadership of Pope Pius X, for whom religion and politics were inseparable, it was blasphemy to call for legal separation of Church and state.

New challenges to the Church were posed in the 20th century. In the chaos of the First World War, the 1917 October Revolution took place in Russia, deposing the Tsar and installing a communist government. Added now to the 19th-century Catholic anti-socialism was a new and energetic Christian anti-communism. In addition, new nationalist and fascist regimes arose, in which the rights of the universal Church were negated. Pius XI, who headed the Church in this period, preached against an "excessive nationalism" that denied the right of other nations to develop.

The most notable papal encyclicals of the era addressed the need to maintain the independence of religious values (*Casti Connubi*), and the prevention of the absorption of the Catholic Church by fascist regimes (*Non Abbiamo Bisogno*). The condemnation by Pius XI in 1926 of Action Française, led by Charles Maurras, was a critical pronouncement for Catholics. The movement, which put "politics above all" (Politique d'Abord) and exploited Catholic devotion for political ends, had gained the support of the Catholic masses in France and abroad. Despite the anger of Holy See, the monarchist, anti-liberal, anti-communist, and antisemitic ideas of Action Française, as well as its opposition to freemasonry and support for an "order" in reaction to the ideals of the French Revolution, penetrated deep into Catholic consciousness, even outside France in the years following the Great War. In March 1937, two highly important encyclicals, one on the situation of the Church in Germany and rejecting racism (*Mit brennender Sorge*) and

the other on the rejection of Godless communism (*Divini Redemptoris*), were issued by Pope Pius XI.⁷

The Implications for Argentina

In Latin America, “Romanization”—the centralization of Catholicism and the reorganization of the Latin American Church under the direct control of the Vatican—became more tangible with the convening of the Primer Concilio Plenario Latino-Americano (First Latin American Plenary Council) at the beginning of the 20th century. The participating prelates endorsed numerous resolutions rejecting liberal-Protestant pan-Americanism, as well as rulings on paganism, superstitions, religious ignorance, socialism, freemasonry, and freedom of the press.⁸

Argentinean Catholicism mobilized for political and social action in the face of the onslaught of liberalism there. A Catholic political party, Unión Católica (Catholic Union), was formed in 1884. This party declined and weakened, but was succeeded by other Catholic parties, although most Catholics preferred to remain in the traditional parties while trying to introduce Christian principles into the political arena.⁹

Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, rejected the idea of a “class struggle” and called for peace and harmony between the different classes, and between employers and their workers. It served as a guiding light for “social Catholics,” who founded numerous organizations to promote the pope's message. In 1892, Catholic trade unions (*Círculos de Obreros*) were set up by Father Federico Grote, an immigrant from Germany, who tried to realize in Argentina the social ideals then being promoted in Europe. The aim of the Catholic trade unions was to organize the workers within the framework of the *Syllabus* and *Rerum Novarum*, taking practical steps to halt the “affliction” of socialism, which was expanding enormously and seeking to attract the working classes.¹⁰

The 1920s saw changes in Church organization, and the founding of charities and other lay organizations, whose aim, according to the Marxist historian Juan Rosales, was not to overthrow capitalism but to make it “more ethical” through criticism of its “excesses,” while respecting its customs, principles, and its permanence, “to Christianize capitalism.”¹¹

These years saw the establishment of a weekly journal, *Criterio*, the Cursos de Cultura Católica (Courses in Catholic Culture), and Acción Católica Argentina (Argentine Catholic Action). During the 1930s, the ideas of the French Right, especially those of Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras,

found fertile soil and exerted great influence among the younger generation of intellectuals, especially within the Courses in Catholic Culture. Alongside the ideology of “integral nationalism,” based on the French model, was “integral Catholicism” developed and inspired by Rome.

Following Pius XI’s 1926 denunciation of Maurras’s Action Française, and the establishment of Catholic Action in Argentina in 1931, the tendency towards centralization and “Romanization” grew. Catholic philosophers, chiefly the Neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain, also made an impression on Argentine Catholicism, but support for Maritain waned after the publication of his book, *Integral Humanism*, in which his democratic and pluralist leanings in facing the problems of the modern world were evident. He also lost favor among Argentine Catholics because he refused to look on the Spanish Civil War as a religious “crusade.”¹²

The political front witnessed the failure of the Church’s active opposition to the liberalism which had taken root in the 1880s. Yet, deep within society there was evidently an accumulation of anti-liberalism which sought expression. An opportunity arose with the success of the military coup of September 1930.¹³

1930–1945: THE CHURCH AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN THE STATE

1930: The Military Coup

September 1930 saw the first ousting of a civilian regime by a military junta in the 20th century. The oligarchy, which had temporarily yielded its political hegemony, but without losing its grip on the economy, seized power through a military coup led by General José P. Uriburu. The liberal democratic republic headed by President Hipólito Irigoyen, in whose government the middle class had participated, came to an end, and a new era opened known as the “Neo-Conservative Restoration.”¹⁴

The world economic crisis of 1929 with all its ramifications had been felt in Argentina too, and influenced its development for many years albeit less severely than in other countries. The following year was a turning point in Argentinean political history. The golden age of the open society waned in the ensuing decade as the “age of plenty” when millions of people had flowed into the country ended. The country’s economy, based on exports, was severely affected: wheat and meat prices fell on the international market, and as a result, Argentina had to dip into its gold reserves to pay for its imports. The crisis weakened the democratic regime and led to the coup,

actively supported by the middle and upper classes, who were disillusioned by the liberal project of the 1880s Generation. The degree of support and the participation of Catholics in the 1930 coup must be understood in the context of the political challenges of the period, both globally and in Argentina. Notable Catholic personalities supported Uriburu in reshaping Argentina as a conservative and authoritarian state with a corporate emphasis.¹⁵

This Catholic involvement and its successful outcome had already been sensed towards the end of the 1920s.¹⁶ The position of the Catholic hierarchy, which had been reinforced under the rule of the Radical party prior to 1930, became even stronger after that party lost power as a result of the coup.

In the confrontation between Catholicism and modernism, the Church's support for the revolution reflected its opposition to rationalism, materialism, liberalism, and socialism. In the relations between Church and state in Argentina, support for the coup reflected the Church's desire to establish a regime that would allow it to reassert its preeminence following the confrontation of the previous years with the 1880s Generation. These two planes coincided at the point of ideological and practical identification with the new regime, which for the Church represented a hierarchical, authoritarian, corporate, and anti-liberal Catholic alternative.¹⁷

The “Infamous Decade”

The social, cultural, and economic elites seemed to maintain an ambivalent attitude to democracy after the 1930 coup. These circles did not desire an authoritarian-totalitarian dictatorship, yet they had reservations about the consequences of liberal democracy. What they achieved was neither an operative democracy nor even an operative dictatorship, but a “counterfeit democracy,” where the oligarchy could retain its hold on the reins of power. In the confrontation between “Corporative Nationalism,” led by Uriburu, and “Conservatism,” led by former General Agustín P. Justo, the conservatives prevailed. Although the democratic liberal ideal was vanquished during the 1930s, the conservative elite under Justo, which led the country after 1932, was unable to develop a fitting ideology of its own. Still, the regime remained in power until the 1943 revolution, with no diminution of its economic, military, or political power. This period, which was characterized by a series of political and economic corruption scandals, became known as “the infamous decade.”¹⁸

On September 5, 1937, in irregular elections, victory was won by the “concordance” formula, in which a coalition of conservatives and others

effected the election of Dr. Roberto M. Ortiz, a lawyer, and of Dr. Ramón S. Castillo, a conservative from Catamarca province, as president and vice-president respectively.¹⁹

President Ortiz came to power during a period of high tension caused by fear of communism and of domestic subversive activity by the nationalists. Events in Europe, such as the Spanish Civil War, the advance of fascism in Italy, and the emergence of Nazism in Germany, all left their mark on internal Argentinean affairs. In such a political atmosphere Ortiz took office, lacking his own political machine and supported by General Justo.

Although Ortiz, who described himself as a “liberal conservative,” was elected through the usual rigged voting, he sought to install a democratic regime. For this he needed the support of Justo and the army, which led him to encourage officers of high professional standing and liberal outlook once again to enter the internal institutions of government.²⁰

The Ortiz government chose to remain neutral in the war in Europe, with the aim of appearing to continue Argentina’s policy since the First World War. In practice, however, the government policy tended to favor the Allies. In May 1940, following the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, Ortiz declared in parliament the continuation of Argentina’s neutrality, although he made it clear that this did not mean indifference to events. Argentina, he said, felt sympathy for the victims of Nazi aggression.²¹ Nationalists from both Left and Right supported this policy, each giving it their own interpretation. Shortly after his declaration, on July 3, 1940, Ortiz resigned for health reasons, and handed power to Vice-President Castillo.²²

In internal affairs, the conservative tendencies of the government intensified, and any chance of the Radical party returning to power virtually disappeared. The relative balance depended greatly upon the president. The composition of the cabinet also reflected the greater strength of those who supported neutrality and resisted American pressure. This was most clearly expressed at the Pan-American Conference at Rio de Janeiro in January 1942, at which Foreign Minister Enrique Ruiz Guiñazú played an important role. He succeeded in changing the phrasing of the American demands, which originally included a “commitment” to severing relations with the Axis powers, to a “recommendation.”

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S declaration of war on the Axis powers, most Latin American countries broke off relations with them, but Argentina continued to withstand American pressure. In the 1943 elections, Castillo supported the Conservative candidate, Robustiano

Patrón Costas, whom he saw as his successor. Costas was a wealthy senator and industrialist from the northern province of Salta and leader of the conservative National Democratic Party.

1943: The Military Coup

An officers' junta, the "GOU," carried out a fresh coup in June 1943. Opposition to Costas's candidacy had come from across the political spectrum—pro-German "nationalists," the "neutralists," and those who favored breaking off relations with Germany for economic reasons to promote attachment to the United States' economy in preference to Britain.²³

The Church, which had maintained normal relations with the regimes of Justo, Ortiz, and Castillo while safeguarding its own interests, was now pleased to see leading conservative and nationalist Catholics appointed to positions in the government. The junta disbanded all political parties and introduced compulsory Catholic education in all government-run schools. The tendency towards ideological and cultural homogeneity was in line with the right-wing nationalist ideals that prevailed in the military caste. General Pedro P. Ramírez, who replaced General Arturo Rawson as state president immediately after the coup, concentrated on a foreign policy based on outspoken neutrality, which was described by American propaganda as support for the Axis powers. Neutrality was supported by wide economic sectors in Argentina as it enabled trade with both sides of the conflict; furthermore, it was supported by some other countries, notably Britain, prompted by economic interests.²⁴

Ramírez broke off relations with the Axis powers in January 1944, after American threats to disclose details of incidents that the Ramírez regime, for reasons of its own, had not made public. Ramírez was severely criticized in military circles for yielding to the Americans, and was forced to resign on February 24, 1944. He was replaced by General Edelmiro Farrel.

A Crucial Date: October 17, 1945 and Peronism

1945 was a fateful year for Argentina. On March 25, General Farrel signed a declaration of war against the Japanese empire and Nazi Germany. General Juan D. Perón, one of the dominant characters among the revolutionary officers, was the charismatic Secretary of Welfare, and later Vice-president. Welfare had previously been neglected, and Perón established a special relationship with the trade unions. His standing in public opinion grew, and although his status in the officer caste was not strong, he was appointed

Minister of War. From this crucial position, he could prevent rival elements in the military from taking power, and by manipulating appointments and advancing careers, establish himself at the head of the military hierarchy. Although his political career had begun long before, the years 1944–1945 were critical in the crystallization of his political credo.²⁵

Perón was imprisoned by the army, but several days later, on October 17, 1945, a mass rally was held demanding his release. Reporting on the demonstration, the *London Times*' headline the following day read "All Power to Perón."²⁶ The American ambassador, Spruille Braden, however, attempted to influence the electorate in Argentina against Perón. Following his crude attempt at intervention, a new slogan—"Perón or Braden"—became popular, by presenting the Democratic Front—which contested the election against Perón—as American mercenaries.²⁷ Perón's success in the democratic election of February 1946 has to be understood in light of the events of the preceding decade, in which the advent of the war accelerated the economic and demographic processes of urbanization and industrialization. Immigration was also curtailed, which led to significant changes in Argentina's internal social structure.

In sum, despite the economic crisis of 1929, or rather because of the Depression, local industry began to develop. The number of workers in industry doubled between 1934 and 1941, and by the end of the war industrial production exceeded agricultural and meat exports combined. The massive process of industrialization and urbanization, begun in the 1930s, advanced at an astonishing pace during the next decade.

A prominent factor in the rise of the Peronist movement—often overlooked by historians—was the contribution of the Catholic Church. Sociologist Florial Forni points out that the Peronist movement enjoyed two sources of support: a militant workforce which drew much of its leadership from the Catholic youth movements, and spiritual support from the local Church. There were also the seeds of future conflict, which eventually surfaced in 1955, but Catholic militancy, the ideals of Catholic nationalism, and the Church's "social doctrine," inspired the popular current of support for Perón in 1945–1946, and influenced his thinking as well. In his public pronouncements, Perón stressed his adherence to the social teaching of the Church.²⁸

THE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL STANCE OF THE CHURCH 1930–1945

To assess the position of the Argentinean Church on various matters, including the Jewish question, one must first focus on some particular issues. These include the Church's ideological, political, and cultural stance from 1933 to 1945; the principal content of Catholicism during that period; and how the Church broadcast its message to its target group. The historical background, which served to accelerate or delay internal Church processes, must be considered. Intellectuals who represented the hierarchical Church were an important factor as well, because of their influence on general public attitudes towards the Jews.

The military coups of 1930 and 1943, which concern this study, and the later ones of 1955 and 1976 demonstrate the power of the Argentinean military to exert a profound influence on society. Yet each of these upheavals won the ideological support of Catholic personalities and groups, and they may therefore be called civilian-military-religious coups.

The Consolidation of Integral Catholicism

The year 1930 introduced an era in which the social order, the state, the oligarchic regime, and the army were again consolidated, and a new type of Catholicism began to crystallize. This Catholicism seemed to be “integral,” extending beyond the four walls of the Church. Its presence could be felt in its attempts to create a general theory encompassing economics, politics, culture, sex, mores, and even private recreation. This Catholicism attempted to include all forms of human activity within the “integral” and “uncompromising” Catholic culture.²⁹

Personalities who expressed these ideas played roles in both the Church and the Nationalist Movement. At the same time, the circles that remained close to the Catholic hierarchy reshaped its image, too, from the stance of a “Catholicism of accommodation,” to one of a “Catholicism of struggle and opposition.” This was an “expansionist Catholicism,” of tradition, anti-modernism, anti-materialism, anti-liberalism, and anti-Marxism. In wide circles of the Church where integral Catholicism developed, fascism was perceived as a lesser evil, and a revised anti-liberal historical approach developed alongside the discussion of the problem of Argentinean identity.

This ideology stressed *Hispanidad*, meaning adherence to Spanish culture insofar as it was perceived as an empire, a race, a language, and Catholic. Its proponents also emphasized a Catholic “corporatism,” based on the medieval

example recommended by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno*. Echoes of the Spanish Civil War, in which the army arose against the republicans, sounded in the bitter polemic in Argentina, where the Catholic camp largely supported Franco, as did most Catholics in other countries. The quest for a middle ground on this issue constituted a dilemma for the anti-liberal and anti-communist Church, which was also ambivalent about the rise of Hitler in Germany. Eventually, an anti-Nazi attitude prevailed, following Vatican statements that expressed concern for the German Catholic Church and condemned racism.

In internal politics, the bond between the Church and the army grew stronger and many influential Catholics perceived these two institutions as primary factors in shaping Argentinean identity. Most Catholic circles found a common language with the Radical right, typical of various nationalist groups, so that by the 1930s, despite nuances within the Church hierarchy which was very conservative, the Integralist-Nationalist Catholics became the dominant trend.

The Nationalist Movement was a mélange of the radical Right. Its various subgroups supported Franco in Spain; some supported fascism, and some also favored Hitler. Antisemitism was natural to the movement by general consensus and was inherent in its philosophy. It enlisted many recruits among Catholic youth and the lower and younger clergy.

In their debates on the penetration of these notions into the wider public, some historians tend to minimize their importance. Others hold that despite the internal divisions within the numerically small Nationalist Movement its ideas succeeded in reaching deep into Argentinean society.

To grasp how deeply they penetrated, we must consider the historical events of the subsequent years. Church support for the 1943 coup seems to prove that nationalist ideology was widely current among the Catholic elite, who sought a return to power on the basis of Catholic positions, and was eager to regain its former influence through the appointment of conservative Catholics to government office. They exhorted the entire Catholic community to follow them, for the Church was not only influenced by, but served to influence, these events.³⁰

The Target Group of the Catholic Call

Integral Catholicism sought to “re-Christianize” society, and thus its efforts were directed toward the general public as well as committed Catholics. The Church did not encourage specifically Catholic political parties in the period

under examination, but Catholic lay activists helped to generate social action, and guide public opinion through books, articles in periodicals, the daily press, and radio broadcasts.

The Catholic call was heeded and taken up by the public.³¹ Certain cultural norms set by the Church were then accepted by society as a whole.³² Most historians, in discussing the post-1930 period, believe that Argentina then experienced one of the most severe moral crises in its history. Repeated attempts to delegitimize democracy, alongside the obsessive fear of communism set the stage for military intervention “to save the situation.” This created a sense of debilitation of the legitimate order throughout the social fabric from the highest circles to the lowest, and occurred against a backdrop of internal migration that resulted in many normative changes.³³

During the 1930s and 1940s, only the Church seemed able to give meaning, in religious terms, to the social, political, moral, and economic changes taking place in Argentina. The Church was seen as a model of a “third force” acting between liberalism and communism, which could encourage social processes in harmony with Church goals, while restraining those opposed to its philosophy.

The International Eucharistic Congress

Historians, clergymen, and Catholic laymen consider the 32nd International Eucharistic Congress held in Buenos Aires in September 1934, to be a watershed event in Argentinean history.³⁴ One of the most important Catholic events of the period, the large gathering was attended by some of the highest-ranking figures in the Catholic Church, including papal legate Eugenio Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII). These congresses, first organized in 1881, were intended to promote Christian devotion to the Eucharist. Because of the close interaction of the Church and Argentinean society in the 1930s, the event had significant political and social importance. The Vatican chose Argentina as the congress venue because of the importance it ascribed to the Church in that country and to safeguard the future of the Church there. It was deemed a great honor for Argentina to host the first Eucharistic Congress to be held in Latin America.

Catholic laymen worked with the clergy on the various preparatory committees and fulfilled many practical functions. The landowning oligarchy were prominent on these committees, and it is noteworthy that numerous openly antisemitic Catholics were active on the most important of them. Leading antisemitic journalists, together with the heads of the Courses in

Catholic Culture, contributed to a special issue of *Criterio* to mark the congress. A significant event in the collective consciousness, the congress signaled a peak in the reinforcement of the Catholic Church in Argentina and was a staging point for the future.³⁵

For integral Catholics, the congress was an additional stage in its attempt to re-Christianize society, with *Jesucristo Rey* (Jesus Christ the King) as the symbol for their social goals. Intellectual activity and mass demonstrations were two interconnected and complementary paths to achieve it.

Integral Catholics saw the congress as a sign that the period of liberalism in Argentina had come to an end, and that uncompromising Catholics were ready to assume their roles as leaders of society. Catholicism in all its emotional and organizational strength was apparent in bringing the masses out onto the streets. The President, General Justo, recited a prayer of consecration of the nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.³⁶ More than a million people joined in communal prayer on the closing night of the Congress. Integral Catholics perceived in the success of the congress a newly-evident ability to mobilize the masses and offer an alternative to the modern materialistic, liberal, and socialist world.

The sense of power that pervaded the both the Church hierarchy and the state leaders formed the social and political background for the approach to Jewish issues in post-congress Argentina. Its social and public status was at its zenith and Church approval had become vital for maintaining social stability in the country. The Jewish question was an area wherein the Church could act with the greatest independence.³⁷

NOTES

1. Joaquín Adúriz, S. J., “Religión,” *Argentina, 1930–1960* (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1960).
2. *The Spanish Tradition in America*, ed. Charles Gibson (New York: Harper and Row, 1968). On the conversion of the native inhabitants, see Juan Carlos Zuretti, *Nueva historia eclesiástica argentina* (Buenos Aires: Itinerarium, 1972); D. Vicente Sierra, *El sentido misional de la conquista* (Buenos Aires: Huarpes, 1944); N.a., *500 Años de Cristianismo en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Centro Nueva Tierra, CEHILA, 1992); J. J. Hernández Arregui, *La formación de la conciencia nacional* (Buenos Aires: Plus Ultra, 1973). For “Inter Caetaera”—1943 and “Eximia Devotionis”—1501, see Zuretti, *Nueva historia eclesiástica*, 39–41.

3. Joaquín Carregal Puga, “Aproximaciones a una lectura social de la historia eclesiástica argentina,” *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 43 (1981): 1972–73, 1975–76. Floreal Forni, “Catholic Doctrinal and Ideological Differentiation and Modernization in Latin America” (Ph.D. diss. University of Chicago, 1973). For studies on the modern history of the Church, see Aubert, Bruls, and Pike, *Nueva historia de la Iglesia* (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1977); Enrique Dussel, *Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina, coloniaje y liberación* (Barcelona: Nova Terra, 1974); Richard E. Greenleaf, ed., *The Roman Catholic Church in Colonial Latin America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971); Juan Álvarez Gómez, *Manual de la Iglesia en Latinoamérica* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Claretiana, 1982), 48–49. Also Zuretti, *Nueva historia eclesiástica*, 173, who points out that the outstanding priests in the process of emancipation were highly cultured, well-trained, and of noble descent. The clergy of Spanish extraction on the whole favored legitimization of the Spanish crown.

4. Carlos A. Floria and César A. García Belsunce, *Historia de los Argentinos*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Kapeluzs, 1971), 48; Néstor T. Auza, *Católicos y liberales en la generación del 80* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Culturales Argentinas, 1975); Gino Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época de transición, de la sociedad tradicional a la sociedad de masas*, (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1962), 179–232.

5. Nélida Baigorria, *Ley 1820* (Buenos Aires: Cuadernos de la Universidad Nacional del Litoral, 1984), 145; Auza, *Católicos y liberales*, 25; Zuretti, *Nueva historia eclesiástica*, 328; Fernando Martínez Paz, *La educación argentina* (Córdoba: Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 1979), 111; Floria and Belsunce. *Historia de los Argentinos*, 185; Haim Avni, *Emancipation and Jewish Education* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 17–28, 201–2.

6. On the conflict between the Catholic Church and modernity in Europe see Émile Poulat, *Eglise contre bourgeoisie* (Paris: Casterman, 1977); idem, *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral* (Paris: Casterman, 1972), 11–81; on the conflict in Latin America, see Floreal Forni, “Catolicismo y Modernidad en América Latina,” *Sociedad y Religión* 5 (1987): 26–34; Pierre Sanchis (org.), *Catolicismo: Modernidade e tradição* (Rio de Janeiro: Edicoes Loyola, 1992), 9–39; see also José Andrés-Gallego, Antón M. Pazos, and Luis de Llera, *Los españoles entre la religión y la política* (Madrid: Unión Editorial, 1996), 84–99; Dussel, *Historia de la Iglesia*, 160. On the *Syllabus of Errors*,

see Émile Poulat, *Intégrisme*, 69–75; n.a. *Colección de encíclicas pontificias*, vols. 1 and 2 (Madrid: BAC, 1967).

7. Ibid., encyclical of Pius XI. On Charles Maurras see Henri Massis, *La vida intelectual en Francia en época de Maurras* (Madrid: Rialp, 1950); Zeev Sternhell, *La Droite révolutionnaire, 1885–1914: Les origines françaises du fascisme* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1978).

8. See *Acta et Decreta Concilii Plenarii Americae Latine* (Rome: Ex Typ. Vaticano, 1900), in Frotunato Mallimaci, “Catholicisme et état militaire en Argentine, 1930–1946” (Ph.D. diss., École des Hautes Études, Paris, 1988).

9. Néstor T. Auza, *Los católicos argentinos, su experiencia política y social* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Diagrama, 1962), 29–31, 33–53; idem, *Corrientes sociales del catolicismo argentino* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Claretiana, 1984); José Pagés, *Origen y desarrollo de las ideas demócrata-cristianas en nuestro país* (Buenos Aires: Edición del Autor, 1945), 28; idem, *Ensayos sindicales de inspiración católica en la República Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Difusión, 1945).

10. On Father Frederico Grote, see Alfredo Sánchez Gamarra, *Vida del Padre Grote, Redentorista* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Studium, 1949).

11. Auza, *Los Católicos*; Gerardo T. Farrel, *Doctrina social de la Iglesia* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Patria Grande, 1976), 62–67. Juan Rosales, *Cristo y/o Marx* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Cartago, 1985), 55–57.

12. Floreal Forni, “Ética social: El dilema del catolicismo en el contexto latino-americano, *Sociedad y Religión*, no. 2 (1986). The author analyzes the influence Charles Maurras’s philosophy in Latin America. This analysis was confirmed in personal interviews with leading personalities active in the period. Dr. Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, interviewed by Graciela Ben-Dror, 23 August 1990; Dr. Manuel Ordoñez, interviewed by idem, 24 April 1986; Father Dr. Carlos Cuchetti, interviewed by idem, 18 April 1986. See also Raúl Rivera de Olázabal, *Por una cultura católica* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Claretiana, 1986). On Action Française, see Zeev Sternhell, *La droite révolutionnaire*, 98–100, 141–46. On Maritain in Argentina, see Floreal Forni, “Catolicismo y Peronismo” (I) *Unidos*, no. 14 (April 1987): 212–21; Jacques Maritain, *Humanismo Integral* (Buenos Aires: Carlos Loche, 1966).

13. Adúriz, “Religión,” 424.

14. Floria and Belsunce, *Historia de los argentinos*, 311ff.

15. Fortunato Mallimaci, *El catolicismo integral en la Argentina, 1930–1946* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 1988); Emilio Mignone, *Iglesia y Dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Pensamiento Nacional, 1986);

Guillermo O'Donnell, *Estado y alianzas en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Doc. Cedes, 1976); Alain Rouquié, *Poder militar y sociedad política en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Hyspamerica, 1986).

16. E.g., the Holy See withheld confirmation of the appointment of Msgr. Miguel de Andrea as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, presumably because of pressure from the Argentinean Catholic hierarchy; see Ambrosio Romero Carranza, *Itinerario de Monseñor de Andrea* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1957); Néstor T. Auza, *Aciertos y fracasos del catolicismo argentino, Monseñor De Andrea, realizaciones y conflictos*, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Docencia, 1987); idem, *El proyecto episcopal y lo social*, vol. 3 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Docencia, 1988).

17. Rouquié, *Poder militar*, 253, Marysa Navarro Gerassi, *Los Nacionalistas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Álvarez, 1969), 159; Carlos Ibarguren, *La inquietud de esta hora* (1st. ed. Buenos Aires, 1934; Buenos Aires: Biblioteca del Pensamiento Nacionalista, 1975); on the cooperation of the clergy with the military coup d'état and the Uriburu regime, see Mallimaci, *Le catholicisme*; see also Loris Zanatta, *Del Estado Liberal a la nación católica. Iglesia y ejército en los orígenes del peronismo, 1930–1943* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 1996).

18. The term “Infamous Decade” was coined by José Luis Torres in *La década infame*. See H. S. Ferns, *Argentina* (London: Ernest Benn, 1969) 157–58; Floria and Belsunce, *Historia de los argentinos*, 238–321, who claim that forces of all shades of political opinion contributed to the downfall of Gen. Irigoyen.

19. *La Nación*, 7 September 1937.

20. On the Nationalist Movement see Gerassi, *Los Nacionalistas*; Enrique Zuleta Álvarez, *El Nacionalismo argentino* (Buenos Aires: La Bastilla, 1975); Christián Buchrucker, *Nacionalismo y Peronismo. La Argentina en la crisis ideológica mundial (1927–1955)* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Sudamericana, 1987), 27–115; David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement: Its History and Its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Fernando J. Devoto, *Nacionalismo, fascismo y tradicionalismo en la Argentina moderna. Una historia* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI de Argentina Editors, 2002). Among the prominent Catholics who contributed to the Nationalist Movement are Manuel Gálvez, Leonardo Castellani, José María Rosa, Julio Meinvielle, Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Héctor Sáenz y Quesada, Mario Amadeo, Héctor Bernardo.

21. Alberto Conil Paz and Gustavo Ferrari, *Política exterior argentina, 1930–1962* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Huemul, 1964), 65–78. *Diario de sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados*, I, 1941. Robert Potash, *El Ejército y la política en Argentina, 1945–1962*, trans. from English by Aníbal Leal, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1980), 176–83. For the full text see *La Prensa*, 19 May 1940.

22. See Arturo Jauretche, *Forja y la Década Infame* (1st ed., Buenos Aires, 1962; Buenos Aires: Editorial Pena Lillo, 1984), 113, 131ff. Mario Rapoport, *Las clases dirigentes argentinas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Belgrano, 1980); idem, *Política y diplomacia en la Argentina, las relaciones con EEUU y la URSS* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Torcuato di Tella, 1986).

23. On the historiographic debate on the issue, see Rouquié, *Poder militar*; Potash, *El Ejército*, 237–38; Floria and Belsunce, *Historia de los argentinos*, 315–16, 317–19, 357. Mario Rapoport, *Aliados o neutrales? La Argentina frente a la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria, 1988), emphasizes the relations between Argentina, Britain and the United States as a deciding factor on the issue of neutrality. He claims that neutrality served British commercial interests and also Argentinean landowners and exporters, whose trade with Germany was limited, while 90% of their exports went to the Allies. See also Mónica Quijada and Víctor Peralta Ruiz, “El triángulo Madrid-Berlín-Buenos Aires y el tránsito de bienes vinculados al Tercer Reich desde España a la Argentina,” *Ciclos* 10, no. 19 (First semester 2000): 129–49.

24. Robert Potash, *Perón y el GOU* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Sudamericana, 1984). See also: Rouquié, *Poder militar*, 335. Neutrality was supported not only by right-wing nationalists but also by some left-wing groups from the Radical Party, such as the “FORJA” group. On the position of the latter, see Arregui, *La conciencia*, 350–66; Miguel Angel Scenna, *Los militares*, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Belgrano, 1980), 195–96; and Rapoport, *Aliados o neutrales?*; María Inés Barbero and Marcelo Rougier, “La producción historiográfica respecto de las relaciones internacionales de la Argentina del período 1930–1955. Temas, problemas y enfoques recientes,” in *Sobre Nazis y Nazismo en la cultura argentina*, compiled by Ignacio Klich (Baltimore, Md.: University of Maryland, Hispamérica, 2002), 129–56.

25. Floria and Belsunce, *Historia de los argentinos*, 369–71; Potash, *El Ejército*, 325. On Perón’s social policies, see Félix Luna, *El 45, Crónica de un año decisivo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Álvarez, 1969); also called the year of civil resistance: Alejandro Korn, *La resistencia civil* (Montevideo:

n.p., 1945); José Luis de Imaz, in *Los que mandan, 1936–1961* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1964), discusses the various elite and pressure groups within the regime that participated in the shaping of policy.

26. José Luis Romero, *Las ideas políticas en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1959), 247, quoted by Floria and Belsunce, *Historia de los argentinos*, 385.

27. Luna, *El 45*, 37–202; Potash, *El Ejército*, 366–401; Rogelio García Lupo, *La rebelión de los generales* (Buenos Aires: Jamcana, 1963), 110–36. On the curtailing of mass immigration see Haim Avni, *Argentina y la historia de la inmigración judía, 1810–1950* (Jerusalem: AMIA-Magnes, 1983), 279ff. and Appendix no. 1, which explains the political map of Argentina.

28. Floreal Forni, “Catolicismo y Peronismo” (I), *Unidos*, no. 14, (April 1987): 212–13, 219–21. Forni refers to Perón’s public speeches, in which he declares loyalty to the social teaching of the Church as given in the social encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI. On the prominent personalities in the Argentinean Church, see *Proyecto Historia Oral* (Oral History Project), for which I am indebted to Dr. Floreal Forni, the director of this private independent project. On Catholicism and Peronism, see also Lila Caimari, *y la Iglesia católica. Religión, Estado y sociedad en la Argentina (1943–1955)* (Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe Argentina-Ariel, 1995); Roberto Bosca, *La Iglesia Nacional Peronista. Factor religioso y poder político* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1997); Susana Bianchi, *Catolicismo y Peronismo. Religión y política en la Argentina 1943–1955* (Tandil: IEHS, 2001).

29. On the significance of “religion” as a means of social and political change, see Hugues, Portelli, *Gramsci et la question religieuse* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1974); Émile Poulat, *Catholicisme, Démocratie et Socialisme* (Paris: Casterman, 1977); Daniel H. Levine, ed., *Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Juan Vallier, “The Religious Elite,” in *Elites in Latin America*, ed. by Seymour Lipset and A. Solary (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

30. The terms, a “Catholicism of accommodation,” to one of a “Catholicism of struggle and opposition” are taken from F. Mallimaci, *El Catolicismo integral*; Gustavo Franceschi, “El despertar nacionalista,” *Criterio*, no. 242 (1932): 55; Antonio Quaraccino, “La Iglesia en la Argentina en los últimos 50 años,” *Criterio*, nos. 1777–1778 (Navidad, 1977): 72; Forni, *Proyecto Historia Oral, Sociedad y Religión*, Buenos Aires, confirms these facts; among the interviewees were, e.g., Basilio Serrano and

Bishop Jerónimo Podestá. On the influence of Catholic ideas, see also Beatriz Sarlo, *La batalla de las ideas 1943–1973* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta-Ariel, 2001).

31. Forni, “Catolicismo y Peronismo,” 1–2; Gerardo Farrell, *Iglesia y pueblo en la Argentina* (1st ed. 1976; Buenos Aires: Editorial Patria Grande, 1992).

32. Imaz, *Los que mandan*, 166–67; 180–82.

33. Historians are generally in agreement on the crisis in the political and social framework, see Floria and Belsunce, *Historia de los argentinos*, 315–16, 317–19, 357.

34. Imaz, *Los que mandan*, 182–83. On the Eucharistic Congress, see *Guía Oficial del CEI* (Buenos Aires, 1934); *Revista Eclesiástica del Arzobispado de Buenos Aires* (October 1934) (henceforth REABA); *Boletín de Acción Católica Argentina* (October 1934); *Criterio*, Número especial, no. 345 (October 1934); *El Pueblo*, Número extraordinario, October 1934.

35. Antonio Quarraccino, “50 Años de Criterio,” *Criterio*, no. 1777–1778 (December 1977). On the committee memberships, see Attilio dell’Oro Maini, “El CEI imagen de la Iglesia,” *Criterio*, Número especial, no. 345 (October 1934).

36. See the speech of Justo in *REABA* (October 1934); see also Ernesto Palacio, *Historia de la Argentina*, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Pena Lillo, 1964), 287.

37. Juan José Sebrelli, *La cuestión judía* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Tiempo Contemporáneo, 1975).

CHAPTER 2

The Consolidation of Antisemitism

During the 1930s and 1940s a number of extremely antisemitic Catholic churchmen were conspicuous in Argentina, including the priests Julio Meinvielle, Leonardo Castellani, and Virgilio Filippo. Popular writers, such as Hugo Wast, were also organically bound to the Church establishment and published a long series of books and articles as well as theological, ideological, and political essays aimed at revealing the “true” face of the Jews as a negative and destructive force in Argentina and all over the world.

Were these priests and writers representative of normative Catholicism in the period? What influence did they have on public opinion? Two of them deserve our particular attention because they had a great influence both on Church officials and civil society: the respected writer, Hugo Wast, and the well-known theologian Julio Meinvielle.

HUGO WAST: ANTISEMITISM IN CATHOLIC LITERATURE

Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, whose pen-name was Hugo Wast, was a leading contributor to the consolidation of radical antisemitism in Argentina. He was from a prominent Catholic family in the province of Cordoba, and at the age of 25 was given an audience with Pope Pius X in recognition of his work as a novelist and distinguished Catholic layman. Martínez Zuviría was known as “the priest without a frock.” From 1931 he was director of the National Library in Buenos Aires, as well as devoting himself to cultural and Church activities, serving as chairman of the Press and Publicity Committee of the International Eucharistic Congress held in Buenos Aires in October 1934. In 1937 he was appointed president of the National Cultural Council, and in 1941, under the presidency of Dr. Ramón Castillo, he served as government representative to the province of Catamarca. Following the military coup of October 1943, the new president, General Pedro P. Ramírez, appointed Wast as minister of Education and Justice, the acme of his public career. His major achievement was the publication of a decree, on 31 December 1943,

introducing compulsory Catholic education into the public school curriculum.¹ He resigned from his ministerial post in February 1944, possibly in protest at the severing of relations between Argentina and the Axis powers in the previous month.

Kahal, Oro, and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Wast's literary output included novels, short stories, poetry, and drama. Among his non-fiction works were biographies, speeches, Catholic thought, and history.² In 1935, already honored with numerous awards and literary acclaim, Wast published a two-part novel: *Kahal* (Congregation) and *Oro* (Gold). In metaphorical style, the author makes use of all the negative stereotypical motifs of the Jew as they appear in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and are propagated by political antisemites, along with racist themes as well.

Kahal and *Oro* tell the story of a Jewish father and his daughter, members of the “Congregation”—the group of wealthy and respected figures who rule the Jewish community and dictate its way of life. The Congregation plots to control the economy, media, culture, and governments of the entire Christian world. In particular, the novel centers on the efforts of the Jews to frustrate the efforts of the Christian scientist, Julius Ram, who wants to eliminate world dependence on the gold reserves concentrated in Jewish hands by synthesizing the metal in his laboratory. The novel concludes with the daughter converting to Christianity, thus admitting the truth of Christianity and the corruption of Judaism, from which she has escaped.

Few of Wast's readers would have been familiar with the *Protocols*, and hence, would probably credit the author with insight into Jewish machinations. Set in Buenos Aires, the novels thus hinted that the city's Jewish community constituted a threat to Argentinean society. The anti-Jewish theme was tied to racist ideas, as well as the general Catholic condemnation of the liberal ideals of the French Revolution and the advance of Communism, both of which assumed to have a strong Jewish influence.³

The Jewish characters in the novel fit stereotypical perceptions of Judaism: “Jealousy and hatred made me into a Jewess. Your Pharisaic religion is revengeful and silent,” says one woman.⁴ Wast adopted racist motifs such as were found in the German paper, *Der Stürmer*; the Jew was “a man of slight build, with the smooth skin of a woman, with black eyes protruding from face, seemingly glued onto the lenses of his spectacles and having the long, thin nose of a successful merchant.”⁵ Jews also differ from

Christians in their psychological and spiritual characteristics. “Jewish women do not recognize jealousy or love, thus you continue to be a Christian,” says one character.⁶ Even the Jews’ physical characteristics indicate a poverty of values and emotion: “This nation has a slippery tongue, cold blood and pale skin.”⁷ The Jew is presented as the source of world evil and corruption. The racist exaggeration of negative physical and spiritual qualities separate him from the rest of the human race.

In the novel’s epilogue, one of the characters converts, thereby gaining the theoretical possibility of equality in Christian society, in keeping with Church doctrine. But the inner logic of the novel leads toward an entirely different conclusion, as a result of its portrayal of the Jews as a world-threatening race, indeed, a collective antichrist. The author’s continual censure of the Jews is aimed at creating in the reader, consciously or unconsciously, an internal dynamic that culminates in justifying the killing of Jews. Wast quotes, supposedly from the Talmud, that “Jews are those who pass death sentences on non-Jews,” and that “non-believers and traitors must be thrown into the pit and left there.”⁸ It then follows that since the Jews are supposedly intent on eliminating the Christians, the same may be done to them.⁹

In his declaration of the priority of national self-defense, Wast thus opens the door that enables the Catholic reader to cast off the Church’s moral teaching, which calls for charity toward all and rejects racism. “I do not hate them...one thought stays in my mind, namely salvation of the homeland, which has already been badly hurt by the Jewish financiers,” says one of the book’s characters.¹⁰ As Wast put it: “In all countries the call ‘Death to the Jews!’ was always synonymous with the cry ‘Save the homeland!’”¹¹

Wast’s ideas were hardly new in Argentina, but his seemingly realistic fictional portrayal lent them validity and local social significance which far outweighed the book’s literary and aesthetic value. The author’s prestige as a writer and director of the National Library meant that his books would be widely-read. Their publication coincided with increasing worldwide antisemitic trends of the 1930s, and did much to spread the idea of the Jewish plot for world conquest throughout Argentina over the next few decades.

By 1955 *Kahal* had been reprinted 22 times, totaling 107,000 copies, while *Oro* had been reprinted 21 times for a total of 104,000 copies. The books were also translated into many languages. Between 1925 and 1935 no other writing of his gained such recognition.¹²

Catholic circles received the book with enthusiasm although they stressed the books’ ideological and not literary importance. Wast’s tremendous

success proves that in Argentina in 1935, antisemitic writings could be widely disseminated, as well as being good business, as is evident from the enormous sales of *Kahal* and *Oro*.¹³

The Public Debate on Wast's Antisemitic Books

At the beginning of April 1935, Gustavo Franceschi, a respected intellectual cleric and the editor of *Criterion*, an important Catholic weekly, announced to his readers the forthcoming publication of Wast's new two-part novel.¹⁴ He said that the two books should be judged not only on their literary value, but also according to the same criteria used in doctrinal debate. The Jews themselves were responsible for their return to the headlines, because "too many Jews did not fit in."

Franceschi praised Wast's work, but took note of the famous author's overstatements. Unlike Wast, Franceschi believed that the crises of the modern world were the result of the bourgeois tendencies of the Renaissance and in Protestantism. Basing himself on the writings of the French Catholic intellectual Jacques Maritain, Franceschi stressed that the Jews had no significant links with these movements, just as they had no connection with the French Revolution. Marx and Trotsky were, of course, responsible for the communist evil, but that was insufficient grounds for blaming the Jews collectively for the woes of the world. *Criterion*'s editor rejected Wast's linkage of "Death to the Jews!" and "Save the homeland!" for Christians should not demand death for anyone.

He also rejected Wast's excessive emphasis on the economic causes of the world crisis, and his neglect of the moral aspect of the problems. These would not be solved even if Christians did discover how to make gold in the laboratory, with the avowed aim of breaking the alleged Jewish monopoly in it. Most of the world's gold was not, in fact, in Jewish hands. Franceschi pointed out that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which served as the foundation of Wast's plot, had been declared a forgery by Catholic critics after a scientific examination of the documents. Christian sources indicated the correct position to take on the Jewish question, and since they did not include the cry "Death to the Jews!" it would be advisable to delete it from future editions. Despite this pointed critique, Franceschi's review was mainly positive. He saw Hugo Wast as a brave Catholic intellectual, who consciously molded public opinion. He was "honest, brave and just, and contributed in turning attention to one of the most serious problems of Argentina."¹⁵

Bitter criticism of Wast's book soon appeared in the Jewish press. Jewish reviewers wrote that there appeared to be a wide gap between the Catholics of Argentina and many of those of Europe, who were believed to be ready to support the Jews.

The most incisive criticism appeared in the Spanish-language weekly *Mundo Israelita*.¹⁶ Before the end of 1935, the respected Jewish author, César Tiempo, published *La campaña antisemita y el director de la Biblioteca Nacional* (The antisemitic campaign of the director of the National Library). Tiempo accused Wast of utilizing his position as a government official and director of the National Library to advance the sales of his book.¹⁷ As a result of Wast's political connections, the German legation had given a banquet in his honor at which it was decided to reprint his books at a popular price to promote their sales. Tiempo called Wast "the disciple of the basest man to arise in Germany."¹⁸

Jewish leaders and organizations threatened newspapers with a boycott on advertising if they continued to print excerpts from the novel with the aim of increasing sales. Naturally, for Wast and many other Catholics, such steps, served as further "proof" of "Jewish control" of the press in Argentina.

Publication of Tiempo's book sparked an intensification in verbal attacks against the Jews. This took place in the same period as the passage of the racist Nuremberg Laws in Nazi Germany, which became part of the Argentinean public debate on the Jewish question as well.

In face of the Jewish attacks on Wast, Franceschi began to defend the books. He accused the Jews of being "unable to take balanced criticism" and said that they "are unwilling to accept equality, but regard us as inferior to them." He pointed out that the Catholic Church condemned antisemitism, and therefore Wast could not be an antisemitic writer because there was no such thing as an antisemitic Catholic. Christians were forbidden to hate, and the way to treat the Jewish problem and the "supernatural" evil of the Jews, was transcendentally—through "prayer" and "mission," and not by violence.

Franceschi cited Gregory of Tours (a 6th-century Church Father), who had declared that the Jews' insolence was the chief cause of the popular hatred they aroused. Fear of an alleged Jewish desire to destroy Christianity was deeply embedded in the thinking of Catholic intellectuals in Argentina.¹⁹ In addition, Catholic intellectuals may have accepted that the *Protocols* were a forgery, but nevertheless, the motifs found there had penetrated Catholic society and influenced the perception of Jews and Judaism.

The editor of *Criteria* went on to claim that the attempted intervention by the Jews confirmed the existence of the *Kahal* (congregation), and thus, their protest over Wast's book was therefore suspect, as the Jews recognized nothing but "the spirit of wealth and the power of gold." "It all links up with the ancient history of the Jewish people, with the struggle between the Tablets of the Law and the Golden Calf. The Jews were always a 'stiff-necked people,'" Franceschi wrote.²⁰

Wast himself responded in an open letter published in the Catholic press, claiming that his books attempted to prove that "the Jewish community"—the *Kahal*—were the real rulers of Argentina at that time. In their attempt to boycott his writings, they did not hesitate to exploit their economic power.

Catholic criticism was voiced by the editor of the newspaper *Crisol*, asking "Are Argentineans not allowed to criticize the Jews?" *El Pueblo* warned its readers that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were being applied in Argentina. The Salesian journal, *Restauración Social*, told its readers that they now had a reliable document concerning the power of the Jews in Argentina, a power that prevented freedom of the press in that country—a freedom which all "foreigners, criminals and enemies of Argentina" fully enjoyed.²¹ The editors of *Estudios*, the Jesuit theological and philosophical monthly published in Buenos Aires also felt the need to publish extracts from Wast's books.

Immediately after the publication of *Tiempo*'s book, José A. Assaf, a member of the *Criteria* staff wrote that for him, Hugo Wast was a symbol of true patriotism and the desire to defend the homeland. Those whom the Jews called "antisemites" were merely trying to prevent social and economic conquest by the Jews.²² Naturalization of the Jews did not automatically transform them into loyal Argentineans, so *Tiempo*'s argument that Wast himself was "anti-Argentinean" were invalid.

Assaf tried to delegitimize *Tiempo*, whom he described as an ideologue of the extreme Left, an activist and revolutionary, an atheist and rationalist, authoritarian and liberal—in a word, a "Bolshevik." Nothing less Argentinean than this could be imagined. Assaf saw "Catholicism" and "Argentinism" as co-equal, while all other ideologies represented "anti-Argentinism." He therefore advised *Tiempo* to adhere to the precept that strangers should keep their mouths shut. Whoever was not "Catholic" was a foreigner and outside the "Argentine consensus."²³

The outlook of the Catholic intellectuals in *Criteria* circles, Assaf continued, was that antisemitism did not emanate from the intellectual elite,

for most of this elite in Argentina was philosemitic. In their opinion, antisemitism arose from the masses below, as a result of the suffering and misery inflicted upon them by Jewish merchants. Moreover, antisemitism was not a racial or religious problem, and Catholic clergymen and authors had not created it.

Assaf claimed he was expressing the stance of the Church when he charged that the Jews had gained control of the economy and the press, solely for their own ends.²⁴ Neither his generalizations—which scarcely represented the actual condition of the Jewish community in Argentina at the time—nor Wast's books were perceived as extremist incitement against the Jews. Assaf even described the book as “a call for moderation and sanity.” He denied that it was antisemitic and, according to him, “whoever repulses an attack is not the aggressor.” The growth of antisemitism was a result solely of the behavior of the Jews, who bore responsibility for it.²⁵

At the beginning of 1936, contention flared again, following publication of the *Hugo Wast—Anti-Cristiano* by Lázaro Schallman, a Jewish intellectual, who sought to show that the author of *Kahal* and *Oro* had deviated from the Catholic approach.²⁶ Assaf, who became *Criterio*'s chief spokesman on the Jewish issue, devoted a long article in the weekly to Schallman's arguments, defending Franceschi's stance, and continuing to praise the value and usefulness of Wast's books.²⁷

Many Catholics attest that in Argentina in the 1930s a nationalist antisemitic atmosphere did prevail.²⁸ The active role of Catholic intellectuals to the creation of this atmosphere were clearly displayed in the public debate on Wast's novels.

In 1936, the well-known intellectual Manuel Gálvez, an admirer of Mussolini and sympathizer with the Argentinean nationalist Right, entered the debate on Wast's books. Articles by him on the Jewish question had appeared in *Criterio* as early as 1931. In the past, Gálvez had drawn a distinction between observant Jews, whom he regarded as “guardians of the Old Testament,” and Jews who were “socialists, partners in the horrors of communism.” “A true Catholic,” he held, “cannot be antisemitic. True, there are many uncultured and uneducated Catholics, who call the Jews ‘Russians,’ and since Russia is ruled by the communists, they believe all Jews are Communists.”²⁹

In Gálvez's view, class demarcations influenced the attitude of the Jews: wealthy, conservative Jews did not support communist revolutions, while the Jewish workers did. In 1936, when Lázaro Schallman's book was published,

Gálvez wrote him a personal letter congratulating him on his book, excellent in its “concrete and well-documented arguments.” Schallman published Gálvez’s letter, and its appearance undermined the Catholic consensus and the blind adulation for Wast’s antisemitic writings. A crack seemed to have opened in the monolithic Catholic front. Gálvez was forced to retreat and explain that his letter to Schallman was private, the fruit of the intellectual ties between them. Gálvez remained true to his anti-communist and anti-liberal ideas, but in the face of attacks on the entire Jewish community, it was his duty as an observant Catholic to state forthrightly that the idea of Jewish political and economic control of the world was a myth. The Jews did not rule Russia: Stalin did; nor did the Jews rule France. According to his assessment, the Jews were “among the most impoverished people on earth,” so “as Catholics, it is our duty to fight those who attack us, Jew or non-Jew, but let us not attack, through anti-social and anti-Christian actions, those who neither harm us, nor exploit or oppress us.”³⁰ Gálvez described himself as a pro-fascist nationalist and an anti-Nazi, and he roundly denounced antisemitism: “I repeat that antisemitism is a most dangerous error. Whosoever arouses antisemitic feelings encourages the masses to slaughter the Jews.”³¹ His position seems to have been based on the model of Mussolini’s attitude to Judaism in the early 1930s, prior to the promulgation of racist laws in Italy. Assaf, responding to Gálvez in *Criterio*, rejected his opinions, which, he noted, did not always accord with Gálvez’s previous statements about the Jews.³²

The voice of Gálvez was exceptional in the Catholic consensus of the 1930s. Yet he failed to make his stand the basis for radical rethinking on the Jewish issue by Catholic intellectuals of his period. He also seems to have paid a high personal price for his stance; his articles ceased to appear in print in *Criterio*, while Wast and Assaf retained their respected standing in the Catholic establishment.³³

In the pervading atmosphere, concerned with maintaining Catholic cultural homogeneity, defense of the Jews was a passing episode even for a writer of the stature of Manuel Gálvez. Wast, however, expressed the consensus of Catholic public opinion among intellectuals and became a chief instigator of antisemitism.

Wast’s influence did not end in the 1930s. On the centenary of Wast’s birth in 1983, the ministry of education published *To Hugo Wast, in Appreciation*. At a public ceremony in the author’s honor, the minister of education offered these words of praise: “Hugo Wast always wrote in defense

of morality and nobility of heart.... He deserves our esteem, for he helped us to feel Argentina, to love our past and to strengthen our solidarity.³⁴ The periodicals section of the National Library of Argentina was named in honor of Gustavo Martínez Zuviría. In 1992, when the National Library moved to new premises, Wast's name was preserved on the lintel of the door to the reading room, although at the time the Jewish community voiced strenuous objections to such recognition. Even as recently as 1998, Wast was cited by the Italian neo-Nazi journal *Avanguardia* as a prestigious source.³⁵

FATHER JULIO MEINVIELLE: THEOLOGICAL ANTISEMITISM

While Wast was promoting Catholic and nationalist values through his fictional works, Father Julio Meinvielle drew on his theological training to produce his anti-Jewish books, notably *El Judío* (The Jew).

Meinvielle (1905–1973) belonged to the generation of young priests who went on the attack against liberalism in Argentina. Having won the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and Theology in Rome, he began to develop his philosophy, which drew on Christian sources throughout the ages and matched the nationalist political milieu of Argentina. He received his doctorate in Rome, and in his many books, written from the 1930s onward, Meinvielle formulated the principles of integral Catholicism on political and economic issues. He also dealt with historical subjects, such as the history of Catholic Spain and of the Third Reich.³⁶ The focal point of his wide-ranging work was his interpretation of Thomist philosophy. For Meinvielle, politics was subordinate to theology, as were all moral and economic problems. The historical model that he constructed was based on Christian sources, but he also borrowed from conservative Catholics and the European radical Right, including writers such as the Jesuit Agustín Barruel, La Tour du Pin, J. de Maistre, Edouard Drumont, and Werner Sombart. The American industrialist Henry Ford, who had published *The International Jew* (based on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*) was another, perhaps surprising source.³⁷ Meinvielle was to some extent influenced by Charles Maurras, but after the 1926 declaration against Maurras by Pope Pius XI, Catholic clergy in Argentina rarely cited his works. Meinvielle's anti-Judaism was drawn primarily from his interpretation of Scripture and early Church documents.³⁸

Meinvielle saw the course of modern history as a deterioration and regression. Medieval Christianity, he believed, should serve as a model for the establishment of a new world order. He maintained that the ideal Catholic

structure of the Middle Ages was destroyed by three revolutions characteristic of the modern age: Luther's Reformation, the French Revolution, and the advent of liberalism which had led to the Russian Revolution of 1917 that had resulted in chaos and terrible human bondage. For him and other Catholic nationalists, democracy and general elections were no more than disorder, demagogic, and oligarchy. Freedom of thought and speech were born of liberalism, in direct opposition to Catholic doctrine and norms. Bourgeois-liberal notions had brought down the existing social structure and order, leading to class warfare, and from that to Bolshevism. Liberalism and Bolshevism were innately the same, for they both prevented the individual from living according to his personal beliefs.

Meinvielle saw the Jews as the root of all evil, to be combated by encouraging and supporting Catholic nationalism. A talented elite—an intellectual oligarchy with a Catholic philosophy—must be trained to take up its pivotal role in a new, ideal social order. On the international scene, there must be a “reaction” against the recent anti-Christian revolutions. An ideal Christian regime would arise from “bleeding Spain,” and after victory in the Civil War, the nationalist leaders of that country would fashion the “Christian state” that would serve as an inspiration for other countries.³⁹ The rejection of racism apparently remained a central factor in Argentinean political thought, although for those such as Meinvielle, anti-racism did not imply a rejection of overall German policy, which was seen as helpful to the Church in its resistance of the liberal-democratic, socialist, and anti-Christian world. Despite the National Socialist regime's glorification of paganism, he nevertheless perceived it as a possible ally on the road to a genuine Christian state. When genuine Christian regimes were established in Spain, France, and Germany, he declared, “a new Charlemagne will arise, bringing to mankind universal good, placing his sword at the service of the Christian hierarchy and Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰

El Judío—Meinvielle's Perspective on the Jews and Judaism

Accompanied by extensive publicity in the Catholic press, Meinvielle's book, *El Judío*, was published in 1936.⁴¹ In his foreword Meinvielle assembled a panoply of stereotypical antisemitic libels, passed down from generation to generation and by now rooted in the Western world. The Jews, he asserted, held absolute control of “our governments.” This was reflected in international and internal policies, in education, in school curricula, in teachers' training, and in the predominant mentality at the universities. It was

palpable in all spheres of economics: banking, financial corporations, and the intricate mechanism by which various payments were made—gold, foreign currency, and credit. Jewish control of the international media was self-evident, he wrote. Any number of newspapers and periodicals were “poisoning” the spirit of the nation and distorting its mind to fit Jewish spiritual models. Buenos Aires, “the Great Babylon,” was a microcosm of Jewish world dominion. Two parallel processes were taking place in that city: accelerated growth and expanding Jewish influence on its citizens and their way of life. Indeed, Jews controlled Argentina’s entire economy and its production of wheat, maize, and flax, as well as the beef, baking, dairy, and other modern industries. They were to be found everywhere a chance existed of large profits. But this economic domination was accompanied by a no less dangerous spiritual domination through the poisoning of Christian minds:

Alongside the penetration of ideas which act against the Christian religion, against the state and the Argentinean family, the Jews are responsible, too, for the dissemination of communism. The Jews are the secret agents of the theory that the harmony between the worker and his employer must be disrupted. They are robbing the country for one sole purpose: to poison the mind and destroy the heart of all genuine Christian believers.⁴²

El Judío set out the theological structure of Judaism, which the author said he adopted from the philosophy of the Church Fathers. Modern antisemitism highlighted the guilt of the Jew, who was responsible for and the chief cause of the corruption of the world and its values. Meinvielle’s theological antisemitism saw the Jews and their ways of action as part of a divine plan. If there was any meaning to the existence of the Jewish people in the world it was only negative, for this existence caused the corruption of values of Christian believers. The basis of Meinvielle’s view of the Jews in *El Judío* was the writings of the Church Fathers. Whereas modern antisemitism highlighted the Jewish responsibility for the worldwide corruption of society, he saw the Jews as part of a divine plan. The real motives for Jewish behavior were not merely historical, sociological, economic, psychological, or biological. The root of Jewish evil lay not in their love of gold or in their desire to dominate the world, but rather, lay in their role in God’s plan of salvation for humankind.⁴³

Unlike other nations who rose, flourished, and then disappeared from the stage of history, the Jews were given a special historic and theological role as the chosen people, in order to convey the mystery of God from generation to

generation. The greatness of the Jewish people, Meinvielle averred, depended solely on their being, physically, the progeny of Abraham. His distinction between physical and spiritual Israel underlay this cleric's theological credo.⁴⁴

Meinvielle thus posited that the bond between the Jewish people and God, which was only material, did not lead to salvation. Full salvation could only be achieved through spiritual unity, attained through belief in Jesus Christ. Therefore, only conversion to Christianity could rescue the Jews from ultimate extinction and lead them to true salvation. Even though the Jewish people were completely free to choose their way, they refused to recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and indeed, rebelled against him. That is why the Jewish people had been shaped by the influence of their rabbis, descendants of the Pharisees—the very symbol of the “corporeal Jew.”⁴⁵

Meinvielle did not claim these ideas as his own. His thinking was based on the writings of early Christian leaders who were part of the Jewish-Christian polemic that culminated in the 3rd and 4th centuries.⁴⁶

The Jew was an ambivalent figure because he embodied the core of absolute evil and the core of everything in creation that was exalted and sublime. The character of the Jew was replete with inconsistency and internal contradiction. The Jews were “Jesus, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, John the Baptist, Joseph, together with God and the disciples,” but they were also the progenitors of evil and corruption:

The greatest and most serious crime of all time was committed by this people. They are responsible for the crucifixion and death of the Son of God, for which crime they have been called a traitorous and accursed people.⁴⁷

Meinvielle provided no historical perspective or reasoning behind these charges because he rejected a priori any explanation based on circumstances of time and place.

“The Jew is the real Cain,” he stated, bearing an eternal “mark of Cain” on his brow, placed by God to defend him from all who rise to kill him. Like Cain, the first murderer, the Jews maintain their historical existence as agents of the forces of evil on earth. The Jew who formerly symbolized the mystery of divine good in his person and destiny, has become the symbol of the secrets of wickedness. A central pillar of Meinvielle's theory was the direct link he perceived between their deicide and the loss of their birthright. Thus, we have a complete separation between Christianity and Judaism resulting from the transfer of the divine choice from the Jews to the Christian Church,

which is “the true Israel” (*Verus Israel*). Meinvielle concluded that the Jewish people—“the carnal Israel”—now carry the divine curse, while God’s blessing has been given to the Church—the “spiritual Israel.”⁴⁸

The leitmotif of Meinvielle’s theology was that “the Jew is bound to persecute the Church—it is his mission.” Accordingly, the Jews had poisoned all human and Christian history for centuries, and if other nations acted like them in the same carnal spirit, they too were “Judaizing.”

Meinvielle drew several theological conclusions from this analysis. After the revelation of Christ, two ways of serving God—Judaism and Christianity—diametrically opposed, came into being. Guilty of deicide, the Jews operate in all nations, especially Christian ones, as the enemy. The antagonism of the Jews towards Christianity is universal and inescapable. Judaism always followed in Christianity’s footsteps, and the uncompromising struggle between them will continue. The struggle between Judaism and Christianity represents the eternal battle between Satan and God, between Sons of Darkness and Sons of Light, between the flesh and the spirit.

Such thinking was hardly new. Meinvielle’s originality lay in his attempt to unite all anti-Jewish motifs, and provide them with a single central ideological foundation. He tried to create a connection between the traditional religious anti-Jewish motifs and modern antisemitism. In *El Judío* Meinvielle used themes drawn from works such as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, where it is said that the Jews hold clandestine meetings where they plan how to execute their plot:

As we have been taught by the Church Fathers: Jewish action in the world is decided at these secret meetings. The Jews thus continue the tradition of their forefathers, killers of the God-son, where the plot against him was also hatched in a secret gathering....⁴⁹

Catholics in Argentina must not abandon the moral values of the medieval Church, nor strive for success in this world, because that was the path of Jewish materialism rather than of Christian spiritualism. Moreover, the “Carnal Kingdom” was the realm of the Jews, and if Christians entered it they would become slaves and servants of the Jews who ruled there. Meinvielle quoted the historian Werner Sombart, who held that capitalism was the creation of the Jewish spirit. In Meinvielle’s words, “The work of millions of Christians for a small group of Jews shows the material power and control of the Jews in capitalist societies.”⁵⁰

The danger from the Jews was serious and immediate, Meinvielle warned. Therefore it was necessary to beware of them, as of criminals and lepers. The

Christian may not hate, oppress, or interfere with lepers, but steps must be taken to prevent them from infecting the healthy social organism with their incurable disease. The inevitable conclusion was that the “wicked” Jews must be kept separate from innocent Christians. The Jewish religion itself, he claimed, called for such a separation, and if Christian nations rejected these stern warnings, they would be responsible for terrible consequences: they would become “the deprived servants of the Jewish race, who hold the birthright to the material world.”⁵¹

His examination of Jewish history, drenched with pain and shame, persecution, blood libels, pogroms, and merciless murder, up to the present Nazi oppression in Germany and Austria, proved the validity of the Christian claim that the Jewish people were being punished by God, with the mark of Cain as a symbol of their insult-ridden and shameful fate. The deep enmity between Christians and Jews would endure until the all-merciful God resolved that it was time for forgiveness and reconciliation—the moment of God’s greatest glory, when all the Jews converted to Christianity and accepted Christ as Messiah.⁵²

Meinvielle attempted to show that the destruction of Christianity’s spiritual civilization was occurring alongside the formation and strengthening of the materialist Jewish civilization. These parallel processes were the result of the emancipation of the Jews. They, who had suffered torment at the hands of the Christians in the Middle Ages, and had been forced to live in ghettos, now wished to wreak their vengeance on their tormentors. The Church had taken great precautions to prevent Christians becoming infected with the Jewish “plague,” keeping the Jews in the role of servants.

Meinvielle’s analysis led him to conclude that at the end of the Middle Ages, as a result of the sins of Christian clergy and believers, a process of “Judaization” or “de-Christianization” of society began. This process was actually the implementation of a secret, satanic Jewish plan to gain control of the entire Christian world. The genesis of this “de-Christianization” lay in the humanism of the Renaissance; thereafter it moved through the French Revolution, and reached its zenith with the Bolshevik Revolution. The Jews, with their proximity to the centers of historical action, influenced the Renaissance, the Reformation, the 18th-century Encyclopedists, the French Revolution, and the Bolshevik Revolution. All these changes and revolutions occurred solely for the benefit of the Jews and to the detriment of the Christians. Meinvielle’s radical stance was influenced not only by his reading of the Church Fathers, but by Werner Sombart, Henry Ford, and others. This

radicalization may be perceived in his terminology, borrowed from the racist lexicon, and in the content of his writings. His theory of the universal Jewish plot could be proven, he maintained, on the basis of three central facts: first, with the aid of the capitalist regime, the Jews were gaining control of the resources of all nations; second, through the influence of liberalism and socialism the Jews were “poisoning” the hearts of all people; and third, with the aid of Communism the Jews were “destroying” their enemies and enslaving Christians. The yoke of the Jews was too heavy to bear “and it is no longer possible to set it aside.”⁵³

To prevent the Judaization of the Christian world and its surrender to Jewish domination, the exemplary medieval Christian order had to be re-established. Jews must be returned to the ghettos to seclude them from the Christians; their equality granted them by emancipation must be abolished. “We must love the lepers, but keep our distance from them so that they do not infect us. We must love the criminals, but we must incarcerate them in ghettos, so that they may cause no damage to healthy Christian society.”⁵⁴

Furthermore, no room existed in his ideal Catholic society for a single system of justice for both Christians and Jews. “The Jews must be judged by ‘special laws’ which take into account the restrictions which must be observed because of the theological danger in the existence of this people and its religion.... The Jews may not be exterminated, but they must not be given equal rights” as demanded by “liberals and philosemites.”⁵⁵

Meinvielle was fully aware that in 1928 Pope Pius XI had condemned antisemitism, but he nevertheless interpreted the papal encyclicals to support his own antisemitic approach. He asserted that liberalism had already been charged and convicted by those who shaped Church philosophy when they identified liberalism with philosemitism; and the Church condemned antisemitism no less than philosemitism. Although it is not expressly stated, this conclusion necessarily arises from Meinvielle’s established positions. He emphasized that the Church decreed that the Jew must live among the Christians “as a blind witness to Christian truth” and “he must not be exterminated, but there must be no contact with him.”⁵⁶

By defining antisemitism as seeking the extermination of the Jews, Meinvielle can then assert that Christianity is not antisemitic, since it has declared itself opposed to it, and see the Jews continued existence as living proof of Christian truth, as well as a spur for Christians to adhere to Christ and the Christian faith. The humiliation of the Jews, their separation from human society, their ghettoization and legal discrimination were simply

adherence to Christian doctrine as consolidated in the Middle Ages. Killing Jews was impermissible, but all the other measures were in keeping with Christian tradition.

THE INTELLECTUAL IMPACT OF ANTISEMITISM

Without doubt, the influence of such personalities as Hugo Wast, Julio Meinvielle, and others like Virgilio Filippo, and Leonardo Castellani on the Catholic and non-Catholic environment was immense, surviving far beyond their own times. Many of their books were repeatedly reissued with the Catholic nihil obstat (a declaration that the contents do not contradict Catholic teaching) until recently. Moreover, the Argentinean Catholic hierarchy never expressed any reservations about the works of these writers, who became the guiding light for many as accepted experts on Jewish matters.

Meinvielle's influence on Catholics of his generation continued to grow, and many Catholic intellectuals took his theological system as authoritative when seeking support for their political claims. Despite his extreme views, he was not rejected by the Church establishment; on the contrary, he was invited to teach and lecture on its behalf. His books were recommended, officially and unofficially, by the Church from the 1930s onwards. The Argentinean Catholic Action, the lay arm of the Church hierarchy, recommended all his books to its members, including his most radically antisemitic work, *El Judío*.⁵⁷

Meinvielle exerted a major influence not only on his surroundings in the Catholic circle but also in the wider sphere of the extreme Right, not only in the 1930s and 1940s, but also in the 1960s, when theological antisemitism, under Catholic inspiration, crossed the divide into violence. Meinvielle's book about the Jews was frequently reprinted until the 1980s. Like another well-known intellectual and antisemite, Father Leonardo Castellani, he became more active with the passing years, turning into a figure adulated by Catholic and nationalist youth who adopted his outlook. In the 1960s, Castellani revived the extremist and antisemitic nationalist organizations in the setting of the economic and political crisis of late 1959, which promoted a worsening atmosphere of instability in the state. Catholic nationalist groups such as Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario, known as "Tacuara," whose spiritual counselor was Meinvielle, committed acts of violence, which grew worse after the 1961 capture of Adolf Eichmann in the province of

Buenos Aires. Nationalist groups of the 1960s also adopted neo-Nazi ideas, and did not perceive neo-Nazism and Catholicism as contradictory.

The capture of Eichmann on Argentinean soil by Israeli operatives sparked a rise in wide-ranging antisemitic acts against the Jewish community, which steadily increased during the 1960s. At the peak of this activity, the most violent and sadistic case was that of Graciela Sirota, a student of Jewish origin, who was active on the Left. In June 1962 she was kidnapped by members of the Tacuara, who carved a swastika on her chest. The murder of the Jewish communist activist Raúl Alterman likewise attests to the tendency always to choose Jewish victims associated with the leftist movement, and to contrive a connection between Jewishness and communism (*conspiración judeo-bolchevique*) or between Jewishness and economic corruption, which also was a common device of many decision makers.

Meinvielle's influence was not limited to his spiritual patronage of the Tacuara. He was also the ideological and intellectual inspiration of the major paramilitary organizations of the extreme Right in the 1960s. Throughout his career his impact was realized through his books and the journals he edited, such as *Nuestro Tiempo*, and later *Baluarte*, by means of which he exerted influence during the 1940s, and his newspaper *La Grande Argentina*, which appeared in the 1960s, and showed his involvement in what was taking place among the officer class, as well as adopting positions on controversial matters. Moreover, his influence was evident behind the paramilitary organization Guardia Restauradora Nacionalista (Nationalist Restoration Guard) through his devoted disciple Jordán Bruno Genta, and also behind the more elitist Catholic organization Legión Nacionalista Contrarrevolucionaria (Counter-Revolutionary Nationalist Legion).⁵⁸

The extreme Right organizations were not alone in taking inspiration from priests enjoying the aura of renowned theologians. "Catholicism" as a national identity, and a synonym for "Argentinism" and "patriotism," penetrated the very heart of the different strata of Argentinean society, as well as the ruling elite, the intellectuals, the army, and the police. Many of them drew inspiration from Meinvielle's notions and boasted of official recognition by the Church, with legitimization accorded by a revered Catholic figure.

Meinvielle's theology was accepted as a model among the security forces. His disciple Jordán Bruno Genta. Genta became a permanent feature among the Air Force establishment, in which he lectured and for which he wrote a book designed for the armed forces that set forth the theological essence of

Julio Meinvielle's thought. For Genta, too, the central issue was the religious problem, and the Jews were portrayed as the enemy of Christianity. His book was approved by the Air Force and received the nihil obstat from Archbishop Antonio Caggiano of Buenos Aires. It was distributed to all Air Force officers, with Church approval; although eventually, liberal elements had it withdrawn. The book became the primary ideological text in the war against what was described in the army and in the Nationalist Movement as "subversion" by the left.⁵⁹

Whether directly by actual influence on his successors until his death in 1973, or through the continuing work of his many pupils and admirers who were active within the state's power centers, Julio Meinvielle imparted theological and ideological legitimization to the shaping of the nationalist Catholic conception of many of the decision makers in Argentina in the various security forces. In 1987, for example, the nationalist Colonel Muhamed Seineldín was convicted and imprisoned for plotting a military coup against the new democratic government; he declared that he was a disciple of Father Julio Meinvielle.⁶⁰ Only a step separated theory from violent activity in practice against the Jews, who were suspected of being "subversives" merely because of their being Jewish.

The theories of Hugo Wast and Julio Meinvielle were not a deviation from Church norms but an expression of highly esteemed members of the Church establishment whose influence was felt far and wide.

NOTES

1. Juan Carlos Moreno, *Genio y figura de Hugo Wast* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1969), 72–73; 98–109; Juan Carlos Moreno, "El judío internacional," *Criterion*, no. 333 (July 1934).

2. Moreno, *Genio y figura*, 104–5; 140–60; 353–56.

3. See a comparison between the Wast's *Oro* and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1982 ed.) in Graciela Ben-Dror, "The Catholic Church in Argentina and the Jewish People during the Holocaust Era 1933–1945" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University in Jerusalem, 1993), appendix 9.

4. Wast, *Oro*, 152–53.

5. *Ibid.*, 142.

6. *Ibid.*, 20.

7. *Ibid.*, 194, 200.

8. *Ibid.*, 37–38.

9. *Ibid.*, 20–21, 23, 105–109; 201–2, 219.
10. *Ibid.*, 201–2; 219.
11. On the danger of religion see *ibid.*, 7; 20–21, 23, 105–9, 201–2, 219.
12. *Ibid.*, 357–58, a list of his works from 1905 to 1963, in which the total circulation of each book is recorded.
13. See “Hugo Wast, antisemita,” *Todo es Historia*, no. 208 (1984): 40.
14. “Libros próximos a aparecer,” *Criterio*, no. 370 (1935): 316.
15. “Lo que jamás los ojos vieron,” Hugo Wast, *Criterio*, no. 373 (1935): 393–97; Bibliografía, “El Kahal-Oro” by Hugo Wast, 2 vols., *Criterio*, no. 382 (1935): 203–4.
16. *Mundo Israelita* (henceforth *MI*), 8 June 1935, 15 June 1935, 22. July 1935; *Di Idische Zaitung* (henceforth *DIZ*), 1 July 1935, 16 July 1935.
17. César Tiempo [Israel Zeitlin], *La campaña antisemita y el director de la Biblioteca Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Mundo Israelita, 1935).
18. *Ibid.*, 36; *MI*, 28 Sept. 1935, 5 Oct. 1935, 12 Oct. 1935, 19 Oct. 35, 26 Oct. 1935. *MI* also reprinted an advertisement from the newspaper *El Orden* in Santa Fe, which accused Wast of conducting antisemitic propaganda with the aid of public funds; see *MI*, 7 and 14 Sept. 1935. *Tiempo*, *La campaña antisemita*, 37–38, 41–42, 45.
19. “Los judíos y nosotros,” *Criterio*, no. 389 (1935): 282–83.
20. “Comentarios, El Kahal contra Hugo Wast,” *Criterio*, no. 390 (1935): 400. Note that the “Commentary” column was written by Franceschi, the weekly’s editor. Hugo Wast’s letter was also published in the Catholic press and journals as well as in the parochial weeklies.
21. “Los Protocolos de Sión—tienen aplicación en la Argentina,” *El Pueblo*, 6 Aug. 1935; “El poder judío en la Argentina,” *Restauración Social* (Sept. 1935); “¿Los argentinos pueden hablar de los judíos en la Argentina?” *Crisol*, 5 Sept. 1935.
22. José E. Assaf, “La cuestión judía en su lugar,” *Criterio*, no. 409 (1936): 14–17.
23. *Ibid.*, 15.
24. *Ibid.*, 17.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Lázaro Schallman, *Hugo, anticristiano, disparates, contradicciones y paralogismos acumulados por el fantaseador de “El Kahal”* (Rosario: Talleres Gráficos Musumarra Hnos, 1936).
27. José A. Assaf, “Un polemista judío,” *Criterio*, no. 427 (1936): 12–13; 16–17.

28. Juan E. Carulla, *Al filo del medio siglo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Huemul, 1964). Juan Carlos Goyeneche, *Ensayos, artículos, discursos* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Dictio, 1976).
29. Manuel Gálvez, “Comentarios a una carta,” *Criterion*, no. 429 (1936): 60–61. Gálvez, too, supplies evidence of violent antisemitism in many nationalist circles in Argentina; see idem, “El deber de las clases dirigentes,” *Criterion*, no. 194 (1931); idem, “Antisemitismo,” *Criterion*, no. 239 (1932).
30. Manuel Gálvez, “Comentarios a una carta,” *Criterion*, no. 429 (1936): 60–61.
31. *Ibid.*
32. José A. Assaf, “Ante la ofensiva hebrea,” *Criterion*, no. 430 (1936): 85–86. In this article he quotes Gálvez’s 1932 article “Antisemitismo,” in which the author attacks those who exploit and disseminate antisemitism.
33. Bibliografía, “Nave, oro, sueños,” por Hugo Wast, *Criterion*, no. 449 (1936): 123–24; see also *Criterion* no. 436 (1936): 224; no. 438 (1936): 272; no. 439 (1936): 298; no. 442 (1936): 360; no. 458 (1936): 339–40; no. 457 (1936): 315. Rev. Carlos Cuchetti, interview by Graciela Ben-Dror, Buenos Aires, 18 Apr. 1986; Dr. Manuel Ordoñez, interview by Graciela Ben-Dror, Buenos Aires, 24 Apr. 1986.
34. “Hugo Wast, homenaje, En el centenario de su natalicio rindieron homenaje a Hugo Wast,” *La Razón*, 22 Oct. 1983.
35. On the National Library, see “Hemeroteca: Gustavo Martínez Zuviría,” Biblioteca Nacional, Buenos Aires. On neo-Nazis in Italy see: “Hugo Wast e il Kahal,” *Avanguardia* (May 1998): 13–14.
36. Meinvielle’s books were published by Catholic publishers and also by the “Courses in Catholic Culture,” including Julio Meinvielle, *Concepción católica de la política* (Buenos Aires: Cursos de Cultura Católica, 1932, rpt., 1941); idem, *Concepción católica de la economía*, (Buenos Aires: Cursos de Cultura Católica, 1936); idem, *El Judío* (Buenos Aires: Antídoto, 1936 and other editions in 1940, 1959, 1963, 1976, 1982; transl. into French, 1965); idem, *Entre la Iglesia y el Reich* (Buenos Aires: Adsum, 1937); idem, *Qué saldrá de la España que sangra?* (Buenos Aires: Talleres San Pablo, 1937); idem., *Hacia la Cristiandad* (Buenos Aires: Adsum, 1940); idem., *El mundo actual anunciado por los videntes* (Buenos Aires: Huemul, 1940). He also published many articles in various journals.
37. Meinvielle, *Concepción de la política*, 21–22; 43–44.
38. Idem., *El Judío*, 31, 59, 73.

39. Idem., *Concepción de la política*, 90, 131; idem, *Los tres pueblos bíblicos en su lucha por la dominación del mundo* (Buenos Aires: Adsum, 1937), 62, 63, 92–94, 98, 99, 105, 112, 146.

40. Ibid., *Los tres pueblos*, 278, 286–88.

41. Idem., *El Judío*. For the 3rd edition, the author added a chapter entitled “The Jew in the Mystery of History” and from that edition onwards, the book was published under the title of that chapter (e.g., *El judío en el misterio de la historia* [Buenos Aires 1982]). The three original chapters remained almost unchanged from 1936, and it was published with Church approval “*Con las debidas licencias*,” “*nihil obstat*,” and “*imprimatur*,” as indicated in the foreword to the 1976 edition, and the later, identical 1982 edition, p. 23. Enrique Osés, editor of the violently antisemitic newspaper *Crisol*, was editor of *Criterio* until 1932, until the appointment of Msgr. Gustavo Franceschi. Osés moved to *Crisol*, then edited by Father Alberto Molas Terán, whom he succeeded as editor on Terán’s death in 1934. The dedication of Castellani appears in his book *Los papeles de Benjamín Benavides*. See also Alan T. Davies, *A Critique of Representative Theological Doctrine Concerning the Jews in the Context of the Church’s involvement in Antisemitism* (Th. D. diss., New York: n.p., 1966). The author relies, among others, on the studies of James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (New York 1934, rpt., Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1969), and Jules Isaac, and analyzes the responsibility of the Church for the dissemination of antisemitic prejudice adopted from the Hellenistic and Christian world by the Western World. See Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964).

42. Meinvielle, *El Judío*, 16.

43. Ibid., 25.

44. Ibid., 26–27; 29. On this subject, see Peter Richardson and David Granskov, eds., *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, vol. 1: *Paul and the Gospels*; vol. 2: Stephen G. Wilson, ed., *Separation and Polemic* (Waterloo, Ont., Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986); Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel* (Paris 1948; rpt. Paris: De Boccard, 1964); Hyam Maccoby, “The Origins of Antisemitism,” in *The Origins of the Holocaust: Christian Antisemitism*, ed. by Randolph L. Braham (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 1–14; Alan T. Davies, “A Comment on Professor Maccoby’s Thesis,” *ibid.*, 60.

45. Julio Meinvielle, *El comunismo en la revolución anticristiana* (Buenos Aires 1961, rpt. Buenos Aires: Cruz y Fierro Editores, 1982).

46. Parkes, *The Conflict*, 153–95. Also Davies, *A Critique*, 63–67, 68. Davies stresses the link between theology and prejudice, which becomes a theological myth. See also Alan T. Davies, *Antisemitism and the Foundation of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); F. Lovsky, *L'Antisemitisme chrétien: textes choisis* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1970).

47. Meinvielle, *El Judío*, 30, 32, 33, 44. Meinvielle bases himself on John 3:48–50, 19:7; Luke 2:34. J. Maritain was published in Argentina in 1938 by liberal circles of the editorial house “Sur”. See Jacques Maritain, *Los judíos entre las naciones* (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1938); his lecture against antisemitism given on Feb. 5, 1938 in Paris was published in Argentina on Jan. 24, 1943 under the title *Porqué no somos racistas ni antisemitas* (Buenos Aires: DAIA, 1943).

48. Meinvielle, *El Judío*, 34. Richardson, *Paul and the Gospels*, 206–19; Wilson, *Separation and Polemic*, 59–80; Rosemary Reuther, *Faith and Fraticide* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

49. Meinvielle quoting the Church Fathers, see *idem*, *El Judío*, 54. On blood libels see *ibid.*, 37–38, 58. Eduard H. Flannery, *Veintitrés siglos de antisemitismo* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1974), 103–7.

50. Meinvielle, *El Judío*, 37–38. Meinvielle was influenced here by Werner Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* (London 1913, rpt., New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), 321, 350; see also Salomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIII Century* (New York: Hermon Press, 1966), 76–82.

51. Meinvielle, *El Judío*, 38, 44. See also F. Lovsky, *Antisemitisme e mystère d'Israël* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1955), 66; Davies, *A Critique*, 18–24.

52. Meinvielle, *El Judío*, 44. See also Davies, *A Critique*, 61–68. On the Gnostics, see, for example, E. C. Blackman, *Marcion and his Influence* (London: SPCK, 1948), 113–21, 125–27; C. K. Barret, “Gnosis and the Apocalypse of John,” in *The New Testament and Gnosis*, eds. A. H. B. Logan and J. M. Wedderburn (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark Ltd., 1983), 125–37.

53. Meinvielle, *El Judío* 69–74, 76–87.

54. *Ibid.*, 44.

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*, 44, 45. Meinvielle quotes Paul, based on Tertulianus. Virtually every motif of Christian antisemitism through the ages appears in Meinvielle's philosophy; see: *Restauración Social* (1936): 459–60.

57. *Boletín ACA*, no. 137 (1936): 463. In addition, see the recommended reading list in *Criterion*, no. 559 (1938): 260. These books were available for purchase at the premises of Catholic Action (ACA). See also the recommendation for Meinvielle's book in *Boletín ACA*, no. 152 (1937): 493. *El Judío* is also recommended by Franceschi: "El Judío," *Criterion*, no. 457 (1936): 315. Meinvielle's *Concepción católica de la economía* is recommended in *Boletín ACA*, no. 137 (1936): 493. See also the interview with Gabriel Ruiz de los Llanos on 2 Apr. 1986, and his books, *El Antisemita* and *La mala fe*. He belonged to Tacuara, the antisemitic nationalist movement, and attests to Meinvielle's tremendous influence as spiritual father of the organization, whose message reverberated throughout the Catholic world, and whose influence may be detected in Spain and Brazil, for example. See also *Bulletin on Antisemitic Affairs* (in Hebrew), no. 26 (March 1975): 57.

58. See Leonardo Senkman, "The Right and Civilian Regime, 1955–1976"; Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart, *The Argentinean Right* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 1993), 124–30; Leonardo Senkman, "El antisemitismo bajo dos experiencias democráticas: Argentina 1959–1966 y 1973–1976," in *El antisemitismo en Argentina*, ed. Leonardo Senkman (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1989), 19–20, 30–33, 37–39, 50–51. On the antisemitism of Tacuara, see its own leaflet *El caso Sirota y el problema judío en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Movimiento Nacionalista Tacuara, 1962); on the influence of Catholic priests on Tacuara's antisemitism see *La Luz*, 5 Oct. 1962.

59. Jordán Bruno Genta, *Guerra contrarrevolucionaria: doctrina política* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nuevo Orden, 1965), 11–17, 49–51, 62, 178, 210.

60. *Página 12*, 8 Aug. 1987.

CHAPTER 3

The Stance of the Catholic Hierarchy toward the Jews

THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH: THE CATECHISM

Scholars of antisemitism agree that the religious factor is paramount in the development of antisemitism, but they differ over its degree of importance. For some, Christianity was the decisive factor in the past, whereas modern forms of antisemitism, such as racist antisemitism, conflict with the original teachings of Christianity.¹

The Catholic educational system uses the catechism as the basis for teaching children and adults the essentials of the faith. Previous to the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* by the Vatican in 1997, it was the task of the bishops in each country to oversee the writing of a suitable catechism for local use. For schoolchildren, the catechism often consisted of a set of concise questions and answers, many of which were memorized.

The Jewish people and Christian relations with them occupy a central place in the catechism, both because of the early links between Judaism and Christianity and because of the process of separation between the two religions. Until the 1990s, when the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* began to be translated into many languages and circulated widely, the content of the catechism varied from country to country, although it was always strictly in line with Church teaching, and had the approval of local bishops.

The texts of the 1930s published in Argentina and other countries displayed a negative and extreme attitude toward Jews and Judaism. The catechisms used in French-speaking countries, for example, evince considerable variety in the material relating to the Jews and to Judaism, yet a common basis unites them all: the negative image of Jews and Judaism with regard to the Passion narrative. The few positive portrayals of the Jews relate mainly to events preceding the appearance of Christ. Judaism is shown to represent material and materialist values, while Christianity represents

transcendental and spiritual values. In most passages concerning the agony of Christ on the cross, the Jews are collectively charged with his murder, with no historical differentiation between Jews who lived at the time and contemporary Jews. All are portrayed as malicious non-believers in the true faith, which explains their responsibility for the Christ's death.

The teaching method utilized standard stereotypes, concisely phrased and based upon generalized and extreme antitheses: Jew–non-Jew, material–spiritual, infidel–believer, hypocrite–righteous, darkness–light. Through constant repetition, these codes were absorbed in Catholic culture from generation to generation, affirming the superiority of the Catholic faith, and delegitimizing Judaism.² Within this general setting, does the Argentinean catechism evince any special quality of its own?

THE IMAGE OF THE JEW IN THE CATECHISM: GOD-KILLERS AND THE BLOOD LIBEL

In Argentina in the 1930s the existence of antisemitism was officially denied by the Church establishment. In 1933 Dr. Ezequiel Ramos Mejía, an Argentinean Catholic activist, accompanied by the Argentinean ambassador to the Vatican, received an audience with the Pope in Rome. It was reported that when the pope asked "Is there antisemitism in Argentina?" Mejía replied, "There is no antisemitism in Argentina and there is respect and tolerance towards all."³ According to the source, the Pope heard this reply with great satisfaction.

As is evident from the content of the catechism in Argentina, matters were otherwise.

The Central Catechistic Directorate in Argentina issued a monthly publication, *Catequesis*, for the benefit of teachers. In 1932, this was still a pamphlet of limited scope, containing mainly papal letters or excerpts from them on general Church matters or local affairs. The emphasis lay on religious education in the state, on the struggle against Law 1420 (which limited Church influence in state schools), and on the importance of teaching the catechism in the relevant historical context. The catechism text was revised a number of times, but prior to 1935, no space at all was devoted to political or social affairs except insofar as they directly involved the Church. Furthermore, before 1935 there was no direct reference to the Jewish problem.⁴

The message of the Church reached not only the approximately 28,000 children enrolled in 71 regional catechism classes at Church centers, but also the 40,000 children in Catholic schools, who probably studied similar texts.⁵ At the end of 1936, the catechism was rearranged. Issues of *Catequesis* explained that this move was intended chiefly to increase the amount of material to be studied, and a new teaching approach was adopted, based on a combination of verbal explanation the use of screened transparencies as illustrations.⁶ Questions and answers were intended to accompany the viewing.

La Señal de la Cruz (The sign of the cross) is a typical example of such catechetical instruction series, consisting of 57 transparencies.⁷ The educational aims were to reinforce the “complete and whole-hearted love of the Holy Cross”; to implant in his soul love and respect for the Holy Trinity; and to impress on him the value of frequently making the sign of the cross, with feelings of the deepest honor and sincerity.⁸

First the child learned to view the cross as a symbol of the unity of the Holy Trinity and of the suffering and death of Christ. Later, he learned about various saints, among them the holy child, Dominguito de Val. Dominguito’s story is a medieval tale of a Spanish boy tortured by the Jews.

One Sunday the bishop gave Dominguito a present, a beautiful cross made of pure silver, and Dominguito set out for home happy and satisfied. Suddenly his eyes were covered with black cloth and an unknown hand clutched his throat and dragged him into a hiding place where other Jews awaited him. The Jews said: “Child, we do not want to harm you, but if you wish to remain alive, you must trample the image of Christ with your own feet.” Dominguito bravely replied: “I shall never do that! Never will I tread upon the symbol of Jesus Christ!” The Jews insisted: “Child, you must trample the cross of Jesus!” Dominguito, however, was steadfast in his refusal in spite of the threats of the wicked Jews. Finally a voice spoke up: “Hurry! We are wasting valuable time! How shall we kill him?” “Your question is unnecessary,” answered one of the Jews, “We shall kill him as we killed his Lord.” And so it was. One Jew brought a hammer and nails, another crowned the child’s brow with a wreath of thorns, while a third held his tender hands and nailed him to the cross. The small body writhed in agony and began to shiver. Dominguito whispered a prayer as he breathed slowly and with difficulty: “Mother...Christ, my Lord... Holy Mary... Look upon us from above, O God...” The child’s eyes

were closed, but from time to time he opened them and looked towards the heavens, into the face of Mary. At the same time he looked serenely at his torturers. At the end of time, Jesus will be resurrected upon earth and he will judge the wicked and the just, each according to his actions. That will be the final victory of the cross over all its enemies.⁹

The medieval blood libel and ritual murder accusations, condemned by the popes themselves, thus reappears in official publications of the Church, even in the catechism issued by the Archbishop of Buenos Aires. The simplistic story, with its crude emphasis on the antithesis between good and evil, child and adult, innocence and cunning, purity and impurity, demonized the Jew in the hearts of the Christian children from a tender age, when they were still unable to judge such a story on a rational basis.

The story of Dominguito de Val had appeared in *Criterio*, the main Catholic weekly in Buenos Aires, in 1931, citing the *Crónicas de Alfonso el Sabio* (Chronicles of Alfonso the Genius) as its historical source.¹⁰ This blood libel and others were accepted as facts in Julio Meinvielle's book *El Judío* (The Jew). In fact, in the 1930s in Argentina it was a salient feature of Catholic publications and formed an integral part of the catechism, attesting to the permanence of a traditional antisemitic Jewish stereotype, despite all the published declarations by the Church hierarchy that no form of antisemitism existed in Argentina. The preservation of this tradition, drawn from religious sources, was in no way a theological precept, as it disregarded papal condemnations from the Middle Ages on. A comparison with the catechisms taught in French-speaking countries in the 1930s show no mention of blood libels, even though one finds a clearly negative approach to the Jews and Judaism.¹¹

In 1937, the young Catholic pupils in Argentina received a detailed account of the Jews' role in the crucifixion in *The Surging Catechism*, a series of 65 slides. The Jews trapped Jesus in order to hand him over to the Romans, and Judas Iscariot betrayed him with "the most treacherous and awful kiss in all history, a kiss which was a symbol of hypocrisy." The wickedness and treachery of the Jews is stressed, while Pontius Pilate, the Roman Legate, is portrayed as naïve and innocent of any crime or responsibility:

Pontius Pilate was dumbfounded when he understood Christ's innocence and the fact that the Jews handed him over out of jealousy. However, in face of the heavy pressure of the Jews, and for fear of

losing his post as Legate, Pilate found Christ guilty and sentenced him to lashes and death. Look at Jesus Christ and see how he suffered in silence and how he listened to the terrible slanders of the fanatic and wicked Jews.... The Jews crowned him with a wreath of thorns, so as to cause him hurt and ridicule, and Jesus bore his terrible suffering without complaint.¹²

The story goes on to tell how the Jews undressed Jesus and nailed him to the cross. The text concentrates the children's attention: "See how the wicked and treacherous Jews ridicule Jesus Christ our Lord's terrible suffering."¹³ The aim of the slide series is to present the children with as realistic a picture as possible, in all its details, arousing pity for the suffering of their Lord and deep hatred of the cruel Jews who are God-killers. History, as portrayed in this lesson, entirely ignores the fact that the Jews were then under Roman rule and therefore had no jurisdiction in matters which carried the death sentence. Nevertheless, the authors of the slide series emphasize that "the Jews carried out the filthy and cruel job of crucifixion," whereas the Roman legionnaires and the background of Roman rule entirely disappear from the scene. Only Pilate is presented, forced to execute the deed by the Jews.¹⁴

Moreover, according to this version certain "people," mentioned by name, and "compassionate women" attended to Jesus after his death and treated his body with humanity and dignity. No mention was made that these, too, were Jews. The message, repeated over and over in the catechism, is that the Jews made the choice to be on the side of the evil:

No one can claim that he was compelled to sin, and whoever goes to Hell does so as a result of his choice, for he did not take advantage of the mercy, of the gift of God granted by prayers and the sacraments.¹⁵

This religious material is extremely selective regarding historical events at the time of Jesus. It implies that all Jews, from then until the present, were hypocrites and criminals, and that the chasm separating good from evil cannot be bridged. In teaching the love of Christ, Argentinean Catholicism made it essential and inevitable to cultivate hatred of the wicked Jews.

Such a message does not automatically derive from Christian doctrine. True, the suffering and the crucifixion of Christ bear the seeds of a deep rift between Judaism and Christianity, but generalizations across time and place concerning them are not theological necessities. In fact, as we have said, in France in the 1930s and 1940s, long before Vatican II and the 1965 "Nostra Aetate" document, some theologians adopted a different approach that saw

no need for condemnation of the entire Jewish people throughout the ages. Among the prominent defenders of the Jews was Jacques Maritain, who visited Argentina in 1936 and whose ideas were well known there.¹⁶

Regarding the Jews, the Argentinean catechism carried ambiguous messages. It does contain other theological tenets with no all-encompassing accusation against the Jews. The essence of the crucifixion is transferred from the human to the divine plane, on which the physical form and theological meaning of Christ's death are determined. The wording of the question "Why did Christ wish to die by crucifixion?" transforms Christ into a divine figure, who chooses the means of his own death with which the humans who are preparing to crucify him have no connection. The catechism's response to that question is: "Christ desired to be crucified in order to free humankind from the guilt of original sin and from eternal death. He wished to die for us"—a formulation that accords with the theological nature of the question. The lesson continues in its abstention from direct accusation of all the Jews collectively:

The enemies of Christ are the scribes, the Pharisees and the legal experts, who, with the assistance of his treacherous disciple, Judas Iscariot, captured him and brought him in front of the judge, Pontius Pilate.¹⁷

Yet in this passage the guilt of Pilate is also minimized. He is not given his title of Roman Legate, and the entire historical and ethnic framework of the crucifixion is glossed over. The author of this part of the catechism highlights the presence of Jesus in order to confirm the Divine law whose point is "Thou shall love God above all, and thy neighbor as thyself." Regarding the concept "neighbor" the author says: "This is all humankind, even those who belong to another race or religion, and even our enemies."¹⁸

The above passage reflects an attempt to portray sacred history without collective condemnation of all Jews, a theological approach that views tolerance and redemption as a God-given edict. However, in the same pamphlet the ambiguous approach of the Church establishment is evident from the printing of three medieval religious texts containing anti-Jewish libels that are presented as accurate and reliable. One of them, from Paris in 1290, describes how a Jew abused the sacred Host, which was suddenly transformed, before the eyes of the pious, into the image of Christ. Later the Jew was arrested and his wife and sons were converted to Christianity. A church was erected on the site of the Jew's house, to honor the miracle that

was said to have occurred there. The two other instances of Host desecration were recorded as being in Brussels in 1369 and in Cologne in 1153.¹⁹

In explaining this ambivalent approach, we may conjecture that the inclusion of conflicting texts in the same publication sprang from the lack of a unified and cohesive theological position on the Jewish question within the Argentinean Church establishment. The inconsistency also attests to the absence of any critical evaluation of the antisemitic content within the Church hierarchy.²⁰

THE LOWER CLERGY AND ANTISEMITISM

The universal message of the Church was passed on in ancient times by the disciples, and this process continues through the ordained clergy to this day. In the hierarchical structure of the Church, the role of the priest is essential, for he provides the faithful with the sacraments which “nourish the soul” and make the presence of God tangible. The priest, both at the parish level and above, also has a significant teaching role, to insure that the laity has a proper understanding of the sacraments and other elements of Church life, and the Church’s moral teachings.²¹

Many Argentinean churches in the 1930s published weekly leaflets distributed at the church or sent to the homes of parishioners. These bulletins contained a variety of items of social, political, and ideological content. Articles discussed communism and liberalism, with occasional references to Protestantism and nationalism; the main topic, however, was the secularity of the state schools. Note that in 1935, the Church hierarchy controlled most of these weeklies, the majority of which were centrally published and in a uniform format. This indicates the intention of the Church hierarchy to control and unify its messages, by dictating them from above.²²

The parish weekly did not purport to be “a political organ, or a defense or command to eliminate a real or imaginary enemy.”²³ The voice of the parish priest as the intermediary and representative of the only “truth” was heard even beyond the four walls of the church through these weekly news sheets.

To understand the attitudes to the Jews in the lower clergy, some sixty parish weeklies, particularly in the See of Buenos Aires, but also in other areas, published by the secular clergy and regular monastic orders were examined. It emerged that that a major concern was the portrayal of the crucifixion, seen as the event which had led to the historic divide between Judaism and Christianity.

The gist of the religious lessons imparted by these weeklies, as in the catechism, does not stem from the Gospels but is mainly commentary based on written and oral traditions. Here, too, the tendency is towards oversimplification, with short, clear, and unambiguous sentences that ignore complex historical dilemmas. The devout Christian is given the straightforward message that the “treacherous” Jews handed Christ over to the Roman legate Pilate, who, as in the catechism, is shown to be weak and naive, occasionally honest or fainthearted. His “weakness” is consistently underlined, as against the power of the Jews—“the God-killers.” The impression is that Pilate ordered the crucifixion against his better judgment. The weeklies blur the fact that Jesus himself was a Jew, in contradiction to accepted Christian tradition. The text is similar to the Marcionite approach, which separates Judaism and Christianity entirely.²⁴ The “defenders” of Christ are not identified as Jews, while those into whose hands it is dangerous to fall are the Jews. Not only is Christ is detached from his Jewish heritage, but new hostile layers are added to the ancient theological background:

There is a people upon this earth who have no homeland. This is the Jewish people. The Jews re-conquered their ancient land, Palestine, lived there for generations, awaiting the coming of the Messiah, that selfsame Messiah whom they crucified.²⁵

The literary style blends religious hatred and traditional anti-Judaism with modern antisemitism, which stresses the opportunism and egocentrism typical of the Jews. Another deviation from traditional theology appears in the account of the Diaspora. This was originally described as decreed by God, but is now defined as a man-given punishment. The Romans appear not as those who crucified Jesus Christ but as those who avenge and punish the Jews, who demanded his crucifixion.²⁶

This commentary appeared in the weekly *Dios y Patria* (God and homeland) published in Buenos Aires and authorized by the Archbishop of Buenos Aires and the head of the Mercedarios Order. The authorities saw nothing with which to argue or disagree.

Drawing attention to the sins of the Jews in ancient times is not by chance. The theological discussion provides a convenient opportunity to exploit stable, but latent, prejudices for the ends of modern antisemitism:

The Jews, as a homeless people, spread throughout the world, disseminate a Satanic message, whose aim is to destroy the Christian world, thus making possible the re-establishment of the Kingdom of

Israel. This message is contained in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which is their constitution. They have made many conquests and they are now preparing to deliver the final blows. The Jews are to blame for worldwide wars, revolutions, strikes, and agitation. They corrupt the moral fiber of Christian children in the schools, and the souls of the youth in the universities. They rule the press and control the film industry and they decree fashions. Through their ownership of all these centers of influence they cause the corruption of the Christian family. They are the owners of capital and gold, and by withdrawing currency from circulation they engineered, to serve their own purposes, the current world economic crisis.²⁷

The reliance on *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and its integration into earlier Christian traditions created a wide-ranging new variety of allegations, based on religious, social, cultural, economic, and political motifs. The emphasis lay mainly on the threat of the destruction of Christianity and the reestablishment of the Kingdom of Israel. In the editors' eyes, this was an imminent danger at the present time, in America and in Argentina, and this too was the source of its power and its peril. The Jews were the accused profiteers, who stole the produce of the farmers of America, produced by their labor and the sweat of their brow. The nations became more impoverished while the Jews loaned large sums of money to their governments. They had conquered America in that way; Argentina had become divided into three portions, two of which were already in the hands of the Jews.

This attitude towards the Jews became part of the integral Catholic outlook at that time. The struggle to find a “third path” instead of socialism and liberalism (with Jews prominent in both these groups) furthered the old disparagement of the Jews, now appearing in a new guise. The Jews were now made accountable for the “uprooting of Christian beliefs among the working classes and the substitution of Communism, as part of their struggle against the entire world.”²⁸ This was a repeated expression by the Church mainstream.

Apóstol Claretiano explained that the move from liberalism to radicalism, and thence to socialism and communism, would end in the chaos of anarchy and the despicable excesses of paganism. “This is how the Jews as a group, joined by Protestants and Freemasons, rule Russia, Mexico, and Spain, and this is how they tried to gain control in Portugal and all the American republics.”²⁹

At the parish level—even before Hitler’s rise to power and the transformation of Nazi racist antisemitism into a major aspect of official propaganda—Argentinean clergy saw the Jew as the “chief enemy” of the world:

The world is preparing its defenses. Germany seeks the heads of its Jews. The United States will nationalize the property of the Jews, and South America will be re-conquered from the Jews, who have gained control over it. From today, you should know that your greatest enemy is the Jew.... Ashamed by their own cunning, the Jews hide their heads like snakes. You must not allow them to deceive you! Russians, Poles, Yugoslavs, and Americans—they are all Jews, and even the rest day of Sabbath has its source in Judaism.³⁰

New motifs taken from Nazi propaganda based on the *Protocols* made their appearance in the early 1930s and joined the traditional allegations against the Jews as “God-killers,” as capitalist exploiters, and as inciters of revolution. An example of this is the simile of the Jew and dangerous reptiles, such as the snake. Such demonization of the Jew was not rejected by Church censors. This negative image was exploited for political and ideological benefit, such as the condemnation of communism, for the lower clergy feared it would find new adherents in the lower classes of society. In Argentina, after the economic and political crises, traditional religious antisemitism served as an efficient instrument to bolster the political and social positions of the Church. From the mid-1930s, racist themes gained wide acceptance in certain parishes and became a prominent feature of weekly sermons. In the Nuestra Señora de Buenos Aires parish, the preoccupation with traditional anti-Jewish motifs was woven into anti-Communist diatribes, as in this example from a column in the church weekly devoted to the Catholic worker.

Man is born free and intelligent, but in this world some were born to exploit, while others were born to be exploited. Many allow themselves to be deceived by false promises, and from free men are turned into slaves, slaves to the vile exploiter and thief, represented in our time by the Jewish employer.... Even those who demand increased wages, organize strikes to improve their work conditions, and cry out against the capitalists are, like the proletariat, slaves of the Jewish employer.³¹

Soviet Russia was the primary example of Jewish control of the world: “Millions of unemployed were deceived by the Jewish employer, who now keeps them as foot soldiers in his communist or anarchist army, through which they hope to destroy world civilization.”³²

Reference to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was sufficient to prove the claim these were the objectives of Judaism:

Children of Israel, the hour of victory is at hand! We are on the verge of total control.... The establishment of the “Soviet” means Jewish capitalist control of the miserable Russian people, who should be left to their misery and tears. We shall gain control of its property and its gold and thus enslave it.³³

The Jewish immigrants to Argentina belonged to the middle and working classes, which gave the lie to this prejudiced view found among the lower clergy, who had little or no knowledge of the actual social status of the Jews in Argentina at that time. The message directed towards the workers, was based on the Christian anti-Jewish stereotype and now influenced by racist and anti-communist stereotypes as well, drawn from European literature from the interwar period. In addition, antisemitic jokes were published, which highlighted “characteristic Jewish qualities” such as miserliness, jealousy, clumsiness, and absurdity.³⁴

This tendency grew stronger in 1934. It was alleged that the Jews intended to destroy Christian civilization and they were accused of “despoliation of the cross.” They were portrayed as cunning merchants “who emptied the coffers of all the nations through usurious rates of interest, were responsible for the most severe crises, and even for the Great War.”³⁵ More than other nations “the Jews amass money and worship the Golden Calf,” thus “directly continuing the traditions of their forefathers.” Within the framework of a tendentious interpretation of history, the Roman commander who destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem was described as “the good-hearted Titus,” who was but a tool in the hands of an angry God, chosen to punish the Jews. Thanks to this ruler, the Jews were scattered throughout the world, and “would never be able to re-establish their independence in the Land of Israel.”³⁶

Motifs taken from Nazi antisemitism were presented not in their racist biological aspect, which was contrary to Church doctrine, but in their psychological aspect, based on the unchanging, repulsive “collective character” of the Jewish people, whose morality differed from that of other nations.

An invented blood libel story used this stereotype in its counterattack on its current enemies, liberalism and communism, whose tenets were disseminated by the Jews, the agents of Satan.

Old Rabbi Shlomo had a mortal hatred of Jesus Christ, made fun of the noble and exemplary doctrine, and in the depths of his wicked heart, sought the destruction of Christianity. One day he discovered that his son had converted in secret to Christianity, so he tore his clothes, undressed him completely, tied him to a post and lashed him mercilessly, in spite of his great love for him. The father continued to beat his son cruelly until the latter collapsed unconscious into a pool of his own blood. The father calmly prepared a cross, nails and a crown of thorns. It appears that Satan, with his cruel inspiration, came to his aid and secretly aroused this great hatred.³⁷

When the book *Tiempos Amargos* (Bitter times), by the antisemitic author Juan Carlos Moreno, was published toward the end of 1935, publicity for it emphasized “the labor crisis and the tactics of the Jewish capitalist.”³⁸ By the end of that year, the passing of the Nuremberg Laws in Nazi Germany lent such ideas wide currency.

Of the sixty-odd weeklies that were examined, about half evince hostility to the Jews, with modern antisemitic motifs appearing both as a prejudice and as a political tool.³⁹

About half of them warmly recommended Moreno’s book, along with Hugo Wast’s *Kahal* and *Oro*. Also appearing at the end of 1935 was Wast’s letter, “The Jewish Domination of Argentina,” in which he claimed that his books relied on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and that the Jews were attempting to prevent publication of his works:

It is written in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* that whoever tries to attack us in his writings will be unable to find a printer to publish his work. Those who claim the *Protocols* are a forgery are responsible for this.... In my books I have tried to prove, without casting aspersions, and based on quotations only from Jewish writers, what is the policy of “Congregation,” but this is illegal. The constitution of the State allows it, but the “Congregation” prevents its publication. Even if the majority of the citizens of this country supported me and repeated my words, stated publicly, the Jews would pursue me unto the fifth generation.⁴⁰

This letter was also published on September 10, 1935 in the nationalist, antisemitic, and pro-Nazi newspaper owned by Enrique Osés, *Crisol*. On September 3, it had featured in the Catholic newspaper *El Pueblo* under the headline “*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion Are Being Implemented in the Argentine Republic.*”⁴¹ Antisemitic-minded Catholics quoted the *Protocols* to “prove” that Jews were behind socialism and liberalism, and drew a link between the many condemnations in Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors* (1869), and Jewish connection to those movements, even though the papal document itself did not make this assumption.

On the basis of these ideological roots, it is important to analyze Catholic reactions to the penetration into Argentina of Nazi propaganda.

NAZI PROPAGANDA PENETRATES ARGENTINA, 1938–1943

In 1938, proof of efforts to organize Nazi activities and Nazi education in Argentina were presented to the parliament. In August of that year, the Committee for Constitutional Affairs was set up as a commission of inquiry into attempts to destroy the state and its institutions. The Socialist representative on this Commission, Enrique Dickman, of Jewish extraction, presented to Parliament a list of all organizations which were serving to camouflage Nazi propaganda activity as well as serving as centers of education for that purpose.

In the first half of 1939, the subject was widely covered in the liberal and socialist press of Argentina. President Dr. Roberto Ortiz requested a legal investigation, and when the committee findings were confirmed, the government published a decree on May 15, 1939 banning the Nazi party. This had been founded in Buenos Aires early in 1931 under the name *Landesgruppe of the German Nationalist Workers’ Party (NSDAP)* by a heterogeneous group of Germans who stressed the values of the German *Volk* and *Reich* and were eager to overturn the democratic system and do away with “Jewish influence.”⁴² Two years later, on June 19, 1941, the Argentinean Congress, under the leadership of the Conservative government, finally approved the establishment of a Commission for the Investigation of anti-Argentine Activities (*Comisión Investigadora de Actividades anti-Argentinas*) at the suggestion of the opposition parties.⁴³

This second commission was set up primarily to identify the activities of the Axis powers in Argentina. In its first report, it revealed the existence of a Nazi party in Argentina despite the efforts of the regime to ban it. The

commission further uncovered diplomatic communications that described the ways in which the Nazi regime worked in order to facilitate its penetration into Argentina. Presented to parliament in mid-1941, the commission found that the Nazi party continued to exist under its previous leadership, but disguised as the “Federation of Circles for Welfare and Culture.” A second group, the Organization of Expatriate Germans, had been established in 1937 and was still active, under the control of the Third Reich’s Foreign Ministry. In October 1938, the Argentine embassy in Berlin had forwarded to the German Foreign Ministry information on expatriate Germans and their descendants, as well as the degree of their observance of orders from the Reich. The commission found that the investment of German capital in Argentina was minimal, and German economic influence was very limited. Written propaganda was widely circulated throughout the country, however, by the official German news agencies, acting as agents for the Nazi regime, and under the direct supervision of their representatives in the German embassy in Buenos Aires. The commission noted that German propaganda ran counter to historic Argentinean values, and attacked countries which maintained normal relations with Argentina.⁴⁴ The Nazi regime exploited others means of propaganda and penetration through the radio, films, and various forms of advertising, as well as books and posters. Other German agencies were active in Argentina, such as the German Rail Authority and the representative of the Leipzig Fair, Georg Bein, who promoted the event although he admitted that “at this time, it is rather difficult to visit it.” Bein donated funds to the antisemitic newspaper *El Pampero* of Enrique Osés, a nationalist Catholic. This and other nationalistic newspapers, such as *Bandera Argentina*, also received assistance from the German embassy.⁴⁵ The commission’s overall conclusion was that all representatives and commercial agencies were no more than a cover for the dissemination of National Socialist propaganda, controlled directly by the government of the Third Reich or through its diplomatic representatives in Argentina.

One of the commission’s reports concerned foreign—especially Italian and German—schools in Argentina. The latter were apparently entirely dependent on the German Ministry of Education, which, through the German embassy in Buenos Aires, supplied educational material and texts with blatant Nazi content in a system mobilized in the service of National Socialist ideology; German teachers abroad had clear instructions. There was a German-Argentine Scout Movement, and the Hitlerjugend held a parade near the city of Rosario. Anti-Argentinean activities took place in the

northwestern region of Misiones and in private schools in the central La Pampa area. Several German schools were more thoroughly investigated and found to be acting illegally. Furthermore, the German Nazi Party was still active in Argentina under the guise of the German Workers' Front, and the Argentine government issued a decree disbanding it on September 17, 1942.⁴⁶

The Catholic Reaction and Its Antisemitic Implications

Following Enrique Dickman's first report to the Parliament, the Catholic newspaper *El Pueblo* initially reported, briefly and objectively, Dickman's suggestion to investigate activities of foreign elements in the state so as to prevent Nazi penetration. Subsequently, however, it attacked him as "a foreigner" and "internationalist."⁴⁷

Franceschi, whose article, "Sophisticated Manipulation," appeared in *Criterio*, tried to clear the schools of La Pampa of blame, noting that Nazi propaganda had been found to penetrate only one class there, and was quite absent from the German schools of Buenos Aires, whose educational criteria were entirely within the law. He did, however, attack the Jewish schools: "It has been proven in many cases that in foreign schools, particularly in the Jewish schools, 'exotic' and destructive traditions and doctrines, which threaten the very foundations of our national existence, are being taught."⁴⁸

The hoary assertions linking communism and Judaism reared up again, and in 1938 Franceschi charged the Jews with "Talmudic and anti-Christian racism." He ridiculed members of the Congress who demanded investigation of Nazi infiltration:

The "New Patriots" did not request the investigation of the foreign and Jewish schools, but only of German schools, thinking that only Nazism, which is not taught in these schools, threatens our existence. But the Bolshevik Revolution, which is an anti-Christian and Talmudic racist catastrophe, and is taught in other foreign schools, is an expression, apparently, of the spirit of Argentina necessary for our national independence.⁴⁹

The cynicism displayed in these words does not obscure their obvious and undisguised meaning. As he understands it,

The only racism which really exists within our community is Semite racism, since Nazism is not a present relevant threat to Argentina.... There is not one Nazi member of our Congress, which does not lack

for Jews. In the public sector and in government institutions you cannot find a Nazi, while the Jews are ever on the increase. The Nazis, who may be found, are few and aliens, while on the other hand we have among us countless Argentinean and alien Soviet servants.⁵⁰

Franceschi concludes that “Nazism,” “Marxist communism,” “Semite racism,” and “liberal injustice...do not belong to the nature of Argentinism and we must defend ourselves against them all.”⁵¹ This kind of generalized statement, covering all possible ideological deviations already condemned by the Holy See, is in fact a deviation from the original papal instruction. Until May 1938, Papal letters were issued on liberalism, Nazism, and communism, but no papal document ever condemned “Semite racism.” The reverse, rather, was true. Pius XI condemned antisemitism on more than one occasion, and as early as 1928 determined that “from the spiritual point of view, we are Semites.” In Franceschi’s opinion, the Jews were a greater danger to the state than Nazi ideas because these were less widespread than the ideas that sought to rock the foundations of Argentinean nationalism. True, “the Nazi ideology is unacceptable,” and Nazi political activities should be supervised, but “those who in truth endanger the state, disregard its authority, and have no roots here are the Jews.”⁵²

Accordingly, the editor of *Criterion* demanded “that all foreign political activity should be supervised, including Jewish activity.” He therefore welcomed the government decree of May 15, 1939 that banned all political activity by aliens, for “we do not want Russian Communism, German Nazism, Italian Fascism or Hebrew Zionism, or anything similar to them.”⁵³ The inclusion of “Hebrew Zionism” in this list of other ideologies that had been condemned by the Vatican is an original domestic addition without foundation in papal documents.

In the Argentinean Catholic antisemitic discourse, expressions such as “Talmudic racism” and “Semite racism,” which were widespread in 1938, changed their external form and reappeared in the guise of anti-Zionism. The search for Argentinean national identity caused the dismissal of European ideological trends that had already been rejected by the Pope, but no factor existed capable of restraining antisemitic attitudes. In mid-1939 Franceschi regarded himself as “the defender of the Argentinean national interest” and as a symbol of Catholic Argentinism. Of this he was the paragon, while “the Communists, Fascists, Jews, and antisemites represent sectional interests alone.”⁵⁴ The Catholic interest was identical to the national interest, and in principle Integral Catholicism rejected pluralism, saw all foreign ideologies

as equally anti-nationalist. In his view, Judaism, which was neither a religion nor a nationality, was a “materialist” and “anti-nationalist” philosophy, which ran counter to the “spiritual” philosophy of Catholic Christianity.⁵⁵

THE DEMAND TO RETAIN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH GERMANY

The spokesmen of Argentinean Catholicism continued, on the one hand, categorically to denounce the Nazis, while on the other to stress the power of, and the danger from, the Jews living in Argentina. Franceschi rejoiced when the Argentinean censors banned the screening of an anti-Nazi film *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. He considered it an American movie, produced by a “Jewish” film company with a common interest in producing an anti-Nazi propaganda film suited to the needs of the Americans. While it might be in the United States’ interest to conduct a “philo-Semitic” policy and to enter into a conflict with Germany, Argentina “should not imperil its destiny by joining one of the camps.” The editor of *Criteria* remained faithful to his ambivalent approach:

[T]his does not mean that Jewish activity is not dangerous for Argentinean Christianity, and it does not mean that we should desire our government to take provocative steps against the German government. Argentina and Germany are friendly countries, who maintain diplomatic and economic relations.⁵⁶

The atmosphere pervading Catholic nationalist circles in September and October 1941 might also have influenced the attitude to Nazi Germany, particularly when a German victory in the war then seemed a foregone conclusion. On November 6, 1941 the pro-Nazi nationalist General Juan Batista Molina entertained the German ambassador, Edmond von Thermann. The gathering, attended by many leading “nationalist” and pro-Nazi public figures, reflected the euphoria that prevailed among those who wished for the downfall of Soviet Russia.

Catholic circles derided the Commission of Inquiry and its findings in a hodgepodge of anti-liberal, anti-communist, and antisemitic positions.⁵⁷ In such an atmosphere, where “Integral Catholic Argentina” faced “Liberal Argentina”—supporters of the Allies—the ability of the opponents of Nazism to respond was enervated, and even Franceschi, a declared anti-Nazi, was silent.

Following the discovery, noted above, that the Nazi Party continued to exist in Argentina behind the facade of the German Labor Front, on

September 17, 1942 the government ordered the disbanding of this organization.⁵⁸

In the second half of 1942, the Commission for the Investigation of anti-Argentine Activities probed the activities of some Catholic priests belonging to the Divine Word order (*El Verbo Divino*). In speeches made in official Church frameworks, members of the Commission criticized priests who wrote books containing anti-democratic content, and the presses that published them.⁵⁹

Franceschi directed his response to this censure at the liberal-conservative newspaper *La Prensa* rather than directly at the Commission. In *Criteria* he wrote that the age was one of considerable confusion, and the Commissioners' accusations against the religious orders and the priests could have catastrophic results. The Commission and the media might well exercise restraint and caution in their statements, he observed, for "Argentinism, in its proper sense, and true patriotism could flourish and thrive only on condition that no confusion was sown among Argentineans about the meaning of religion, homeland, democracy, and liberalism."⁶⁰

Franceschi asserted yet again that the official current of Argentinean Catholicism belonged to "uncompromising Integral Catholicism," which believed in the identity of "Argentinism" and wisdom, and rejected the combination of "Argentinism" with the Catholic trend toward liberal Catholicism or Christian Democracy, a democratic wing of the Church in Europe, which in some countries had formed a Christian Democratic Party. For Franceschi, "[t]he Catholic Church has denounced the errors of racism, just as it has denounced the errors of liberalism."⁶¹ Accordingly, neither could be accepted by the Church.

El Pueblo also fiercely attacked the Commission because of its criticism of priests. It stated flatly that "presentation of the doctrinal principles of Catholicism cannot be called anti-Argentinean activity," and "there are no totalitarian priests."⁶²

Disapproval of how the Commission dealt with foreigners, such as Italians and Germans, or with pro-Nazi nationalist circles, took the form of ridicule or was laced with antisemitism. It was said that a balance should be found, whereby the Commission would investigate "all of them," including Jewish institutions.⁶³ But when the Commission directed its criticism against the clergy, the higher echelons of the Church reacted with a furious defense of priests.

Pablo Stratmann, representing *El Verbo Divino*, published an open letter in *Criterio* denying the accusations leveled against his order. The Provincial Adviser declared that the Commission's information was false; had the Commissioners approached the Order directly, it would have co-operated fully "in defense of the institutions of the state." He added that statements on political issues made by priests in the order were personal expressions only. The order itself adopted a position only when the Church itself was attacked.

El Verbo Divino does not seek political objectives; its only aims are religious and social. This definition a priori limits the value of actions and assessments of members of the Order, for these are personal opinions or actions, which must be honored as long as they express personal belief or patriotism, which no Catholic rejects. On the contrary, feelings toward God merge with feelings towards the homeland.⁶⁴

Stratmann's apologetic was based on the assumption that there was absolute identity between the terms "homeland" and "Catholicism." He noted that migrants from many nations had streamed into the northern Misiones Province, among them Germans.

But we have only one homeland, and in time, with God's will, will have only one religion, the state religion, the Roman Catholic messianic religion... The great and only homeland and the holy and dignified religion—these two are the melting-pot in which the unity of the Catholic Argentinean family was created in Misiones Province.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, it is known without doubt that the German monks of *El Verbo Divino* in Buenos Aires identified with Nazi Germany, and Polish monks, who were a small minority in the capital, suffered gravely at that time.⁶⁶

In November and December 1942, the media reported that the Commission of Inquiry had uncovered cases of espionage connected with highly-placed figures in the German embassy in Buenos Aires. The Catholic papers *El Pueblo* of the capital, and *Los Principios* of Córdoba, however, confined themselves to short, dry items, expressing regret that those personages had exploited the trust placed in them by the state. No radical anti-Nazi mobilization followed the exposure of these cases of espionage—possibly because the entire affair was handed over to the courts, or because of political factors in the international situation. Argentina wished to maintain its neutrality at any price.

According to documents in Argentina's Ministry of Foreign Relations and Religion, the Germans made considerable gains in their attempts to influence the Church. In a protest letter to the Ministry, the German ambassador argued that "anti-German" speeches by the bishops and clergy were in fact a violation of neutrality, since there was no separation of Church and State in Argentina.⁶⁷

To summarize, a profound traditional religious antisemitism was inherent in Catholic texts and teaching material during the 1930s and 1940s. Despite its stand against Nazism at the end of 1942 the Catholic Church in Argentina was still at pains not to take a clear-cut stand on Nazi Germany, but attempted to maintain a "balanced" position in its eyes. Yet that attempt led the Church to a blatantly verbal antisemitism in mood and style. The discovery and exposure of Nazi propaganda infiltrating into Argentina made no particular impression on the Church, which even crudely objected to the investigation of this activity. Its central concern was Argentinean national identity, which the Church completely identified with Integral Catholicism and which became the chief criterion for judging the internal situation in Argentina throughout the turmoil of the Second World War.

Traditional and modern antisemitism sometimes adopted a new garb of racist and anti-Zionist ideas, but without abandoning traditional and modern stigmas that typified it in the 1930s. On the other hand, the doctrinaire anti-Nazi stance of the Church was not nearly as deep and could not endure. Long-term considerations were influenced by the progress of the war and the desire to defeat communism, so the immediate danger—the infiltration of Nazi propaganda into Argentina—was obscured.⁶⁸ The ideological model of Integral Catholicism was the starting point for every interpretation.

NOTES

1. The classical approaches are represented by Jules Isaac, *Genèse de l'antisemitisme, essai historique* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1956), 17–18; James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue, A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (London: Sonsine Press, 1934), 376; F. Lovsky, *Antisémitisme et mystère d'Israël* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1955), 103; idem, *L'Antisemitisme chrétien: textes choisis* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1970); A. T. Davies, *Antisemitism and the Foundation of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

2. Paul Demann, *La Catechese chrétienne et le peuple de la Bible* (Paris: Cahiers Sioniens, 1952); Francois Houtart and Genevieve Lemercinier, *Les Juifs dans le Catechese* (Brussels: Editions Vie Ouvrier, 1972), 143–44, 164. The new standard Vatican edition is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Latin text, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, 1997); English transl. of the *Catechism* for the United States (1994, 1997) can be read and searched online at <http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc/index.htm> and at other Catholic websites.

3. *Revista Eclesiástica del Arzobispado de Buenos Aires* (May 1933): 329 (henceforth *REABA*).

4. The booklet began publication in 1932. The archbishop of Buenos Aires headed the Central Catechistic Directorate.

5. *Catequesis*, no. 65 (December 1936): 25–50.

6. *Catequesis*, no. 45 (July 1934): 37–39; no. 48 (May 1935): 3–9; no. 47 (Sept. 1934); no. 67 (Apr. 1937): 42; no. 65 (Dec. 1936): 53–60. The numbers of children studying the catechism refer to the bishopric of Buenos Aires alone, and do not include students at Catholic schools, who were not a target group of the catechism. In 1936, the Junta was reorganized, its new head being Pbro. Dr. Mariano E. Nuñez Mendoza.

7. *Catequesis*, no. 65 (Dec. 1936): 43.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Catequesis*, no. 67 (Apr. 1937): 46–47. According to them, the propaganda for the movie had already appeared in 1936. See also Edward H. Flannery, *Veintitrés siglos de antisemitismo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Paidós, 1974), 202–203. The blood libel and ritual murder of the child Dominguito de Val was famous in Spain, and there was a popular public devotion to him, and Pope Pius IX had declared him *Beatus* (a step in the process of canonization). In Argentina, Julio Meinvielle's works referred to several cases of blood libel, including Dominguito de Val; see Julio Meinvielle, *El judío en el misterio de la historia* (Buenos Aires, 1936; rpt. Buenos Aires: Gladium, 1940), 58. Graciela Ben-Dror, "The Catholic Church in Argentina and the Jewish People during the Holocaust Era, 1933–1945" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993).

Blood libel accusations were condemned in a Bull of Pope Innocent IV in 1247, and subsequently by other popes until 1447. But the issue kept cropping up, for example, in *Siete Partidas*, and in the famous blood libel of the child from La Guardia. See S. Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the 13th Century* (Philadelphia, 1933; rpt., New York: Hermon Press, 1966) 269–

71; Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 124–39; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, “Blood Libel,” 1122.

10. Vicente Baldés, “Plan judío contra el mundo cristiano,” *Criterio*, no. 162 (1931): 73–75. According to Meinvielle, this libel goes back to 1250: Meinvielle, *El Judío*, 58–59.

11. See n. 2 above, and John Pawlikowski, *Catechetics and Prejudice* (New York: Paulist Press, 1973).

12. *Catequesis*, no. 69 (June 1937): 109–49; no. 116, picture 12; 117, picture 13.

13. *Ibid.*, picture 14.

14. *Ibid.*, 118–19.

15. *Ibid.*, 121.

16. *Ibid.* In France some sections of the Catholic clergy issued militant anti-Nazi proclamations, which included a humane approach to the Jews. Examples are the Dominican publication *Septe* (it later became *Temps Present*), as well as the Jesuit Father P. de Lubac, a founder of *Cahiers et Courrieres du Témoignage Chrétien* between 1941 and 1944.

17. *Catequesis*, no. 80 (Nov. 1938): 25–50.

18. *Ibid.*, 118–19.

19. *Ibid.*, 133–34; see also *Encyclopedia Judaica*: “Sacred Host.”

20. Argentinean books on the catechism evince a positive attitude to the Jewish people only in references to Jews before the advent of Jesus Christ. See Sofía Molina Pico, *Todo el año con Jesús* (Buenos Aires 1939; rpt. Buenos Aires: Ed. San Benito, 1955), 30–31, 50–63, 86–89; idem, *La enseñanza del catequismo* (Buenos Aires 1943; rpt., Buenos Aires: Ed. Poblet, 1955), 86–87, 144–47, 154–55.

21. Claude Tresmontant, *Introduction à la Théologie Chrétienne* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1976); J. Ratzinger, *Foi chrétienne hier et aujourd’hui*, (Paris: Ed. Mame, 1976). On the sociological structure of the clergy: José Luiz de Imaz, *Los que mandan* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1965).

22. Juan Carlos Zuretti, in *Nueva historia eclesiástica argentina* (Buenos Aires: Itinerarium, 1972), states that all the weeklies were printed at the press of *El Pueblo*, which would explain why they were all almost identical.

23. “Qué es el Seminario Parroquial?” *Iglesia San Juan Bautista*, no. 330 (3 Nov. 1935); *Ecos del Santuario*, 3 Jan. 1935, 6.

24. “Jesucristo Rey,” *Dios y Patria*, no. 235 (30 Oct. 1932): 1. This is based on a commentary on the Gospel of John, 33–37; *Apóstol Claretiano*, 25 Oct. 1931, 7–8.

25. Fr. Policarpo Gazulla, “A los obreros del Círculo,” *Dios y Patria*, no. 227 (4 Sept. 1932): 1–2; *Apóstol Claretiano*, 25 Oct. 1931, 7–8.
26. *Dios y Patria*, no. 227 (4 Sept. 1932). The publication was authorized by the Mercedario Order, diocese of Buenos Aires, “Con licencia de la autoridad eclesiástica y de la orden.”; *Pax* (Aug. 1932): 102. The Catholic Church publicly rejected the idea of collective guilt for “deicide” at the Second Vatican Council; see “Declaración Nostra Aetate sobre las relaciones de la Iglesia con las religiones no cristianas,” promulgated by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965, in *Vaticano II. Documentos Conciliares* (Buenos Aires, 1981; rpt., Buenos Aires: Ediciones Paulinas, 1984), 469–70; also *Les Eglises devant le Judaism, Documents Officiels 1918–1978* (Paris: Cerf, 1980).
27. “Charlas Dominicales,” *Dios y Patria*, no. 227 (4 Sept. 1932): 1–2.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Eustaquio Vicandi, C.M.F., “La conspiración universal judeo-masónica,” *Apóstol Claretiano*, 25 Jan. 1932, 11–12.
30. “Charlas dominicales,” *Dios y Patria*, no. 227 (4 Sept. 1932): 1–2; “Judiadas,” *Samaritano*, 14 Aug. 1932, 2.
- 31 *Dios y Patria*, no. 229 (18 Sept. 1932): 5
32. *Ibid.*, 5.
33. Eustaquio Vicandi, “La conspiración universal,” 11–12.
34. Juan Cruz Varela, “El día sin sol,” *La Voz de San José*, 9 Apr. 1933; “Et Pro Perfidia Judaeis,” *Pax* (Aug. 1932): 102. On the Jewish Diaspora as a divine punishment: “La hora de la tinieblas,” *Apóstol Claretiano*, 16 Apr. 1933, 6–7. “El judío errante,” *Samaritano*, 9 Apr. 1933. “Los jueces de Cristo,” *Hogar de San Cristóbal*, 25 Mar. 1934, emphasizes the responsibility of the Sanhedrin for the conviction of Jesus, while Pilate appears as a moderating factor. On antisemitic jokes see: “La Viuda,” *Ideales*, 9 Oct. 1933, 4–5; and “La prensa enemiga y los católicos,” *Semanario de la Parroquia Nacional Santa Rosa de Lima*, 12 Nov. 1933.
35. “La Cruz y el judaísmo,” *Santa María de los Ángeles*, 25 Mar. 1934; in this context see also “Padre perdónalos,” *La Verdad*, 23 Mar. 1934.
36. *Ibid.*, “La Cruz y el judaísmo.”
37. “Lirio sangriento” (Leyenda), *Ideales*, 22 Jan. 1934, 2–3.
38. *Iglesia San Juan Bautista*, 3 Nov. 1935; *Ecos del Santuario*, 27 Oct. 1935, 14; *Ecos del Santuario*, 17 Nov. 1935, 14.
39. See Ben-Dror, “The Catholic Church” (Ph.D. diss.), 364.
40. *Ibid.*, 364, 464–67.
41. *El Pueblo*, 3 Sept. 1935.

42. Enrique Dickman, *La infiltración Nazi-Fascista en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Sociales Argentinas, 1939), 7–14. Juan C. Mendoza, *La Argentina y la swástika* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Victoria, 1941), 38–44. The subject was raised in Congress on May 18, 1938 and June 23, 1939. *Cámara de Diputados*, 18 May 1938. 1: 210; 228–30; 18 May 1937, 1978–1980. *Cámara de Diputados*, Diario de sesiones, June 1939; *Cámara de Diputados*, July 1939, II: 127–28; *Cámara de Diputados*, 30 May 1941, I, June 1941. *Cámara de Diputados*, Sept. 1941. On the banning of the Nazi Party see Mario Rapaport, *Aliados o neutrales? La Argentina frente a la segunda guerra mundial* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1988), 154. *Cámara de Diputados*, Proyecto de resolución del diputado Damonte Taborda y otros, 4 Sept. 1942; Mensaje del Poder Ejecutivo, *ibid.*, 17 Sept. 1942, 5: 136–37; Consideración del mensaje, *ibid.*, 22–23 Sept. 1942, 5: 353–61. See also the local Catholic press: *El Pueblo*, Dec. 1942. On the Nazi Party in Argentina, see Ronald Newton, *The “Nazi Menace” in Argentina 1931–1947* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 37–79.

43. *Congreso de la Nación*, Diario de sesiones de la cámara de diputados, comisión de investigaciones de actividades anti-argentinas, 19 June 1941, 681–704.

44. Rapoport, *Aliados o neutrales?*, 153–56, 157–59; *Cámara de Diputados*, 5 Sept. 1941, 4: 67–104, 105–50.

45. In his memoirs, entitled *Al filo del medio siglo*, Juan Carulla admitted that his paper *Bandera Argentina* had received assistance and newsprint from the German embassy; furthermore, *El Pampero* was known to be an organ of Nazi propaganda in the country.

46. Rapoport, *Aliados o neutrales*, 157–59. *Cámara de Diputados*, 17 Sept. 1941, 4: 643–87. *Cámara de Diputados*, Informe no. 4, 30 Sept. 1941, 4: 824–999. Segunda parte de la 58 Reunión, 14. Sesión extraordinaria, inserción solicitada por el señor Diputado Juan Antonio Solari.

47. “Dos respuestas a un diputado que nació en el extranjero y es international en su ideología,” *El Pueblo*, 11 June 1939; 8 June 1939; 10 June 1936.

48. “Una maniobra habilísma,” *Criterio*, no. 534 (1938): 80–81.

49. *Ibid.*; on Jewish schools in 1932, 1936, 1937, see Ben-Dror, “The Catholic Church” (Ph. D. diss.), 81; Efraim Zadoff, *Historia de la educación judía en Buenos Aires (1935–1957)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Milá, 1994).

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*

52. "Quién tiene la culpa del anti-judaísmo?" *Criterio*, no. 573 (1939): 180–82; "Política extranjera en la Argentina," *Criterio*, no. 580 (1939): 344; "Origen del antisemitismo," *Criterio*, no. 568 (1939): 56–57.

53. "Los puntos sobre las íes," *Criterio*, no. 589 (1939): 157. The denunciations in encyclicals were: Against Fascism: *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, 1929; against Nazism: *Mit brennender Sorge*, 1937; against Communism: *Divini Redemptoris*, 1937.

54, *Criterio* no. 589 (1939): 157.

55. See: "La cuestión judía," *Criterio*, no. 589 (1939): 154.

56. "Confesiones de un espía nazi," *Criterio*, No. 590 (1939): 179–80.

57. See full list in Rapoport, *Aliados o neutrales?* 160. Prominent among the nationalist publications was the weekly *Nuevo Orden*, edited by Ernesto Palacio, a Catholic and nationalist activist. Ernesto Palacio, "Donde está el pueblo?" *Nuevo Orden*, no. 56 (1941): 1–2; Raimundo G. Cardozo, "El fracaso de una campaña alarmista," *Nuevo Orden*, no. 63 (1941): 11. Furthermore, in 1940 *Nuevo Orden* explained to its readers that it was the Germans and the Italians who had never posed any threat to Argentina. Ferrari Amores, "Nuestros agresores," *Nuevo Orden*, no. 16 (1940): 6.

58. *Cámara de Diputados*, 17 Sept. 1942, 5: 136–37; on the initial measures against this infiltration see *Cámara de Diputados*, 19 June 1941, 1: 681–704. "Constituída en comisión la Cámara de Diputados aprobó una investigación sobre actividades anti-argentinas, *El Pueblo*, 20 June 1941; 1 October 1941; 2 November 1941; 12, 13 January 1942; 16 January 1942. *Criterio*, no. 705 (1941): 9–10; no. 706 (1941): 29–32.

59. *Cámara de Diputados*, 29 May 1942, 1: 153–209; 2–3 Sept. 1942, 4: 357–93; 18 Sept. 1942, 5: 242–319. On the discussion see Gabriel Riesco, *Liberalismo y capitalismo, nuestra misión histórica*; *El Pueblo*, 23 Oct. 1942.

60. "Actividades anti-argentinas," *Criterio*, no. 766 (1942): 224.

61. Émile Poulat, *Eglise contre bourgeoisie* (Paris: Casterman, 1977); idem, *Intégrisme et catholicisme integral* (Paris: Casterman, 1969); "Democracia," *Criterio*, no. 648 (1940); "Actividades anti-argentinas," *Criterio*, no. 766 (1942): 225.

62. *El Pueblo*, 31 Oct. 1942; 25 Oct. 1924, 9; 24 Oct. 1942, 8; 26 Nov. 1942; 23 Oct. 1942; 13 Jan. 1943.

63. For example: Delfina Bunge de Gálvez, "Catolicismo de guerra," *Criterio*, no. 764 (1942): 185–88, 225.

64. *Criterion*, no. 766 (1942): 234–35; *El Pueblo*, 26 Nov. 1942; 23 Oct. 1942.

65. *Ibid.*

66. Father Antonio [surname unavailable, G. B-D.] of the *Verbo Divino* order, interview by Graciela Ben-Dror, Buenos Aires, 20 Aug. 1990. He confirmed that the identification of German priests with their fatherland was widely known.

67. See also *MREyC*, División Política. Expediente 8, 1940, Caja 4325. On the “menace” of Nazi infiltration to Argentina in general, see Newton, “*Nazi Menace*.”

68. This is obvious in *El Pueblo*. Franceschi and *Criterion* are also an example of how, in spite of an anti-racist philosophy, the fear of communism transcended all other considerations.

CHAPTER 4

The Turning Point: The Military Coup and “Catholic Argentina” 1943–1945

A turning point in the historical process occurred on June 4, 1943, when the military junta known as GOU, led by General Arturo Rawson, put an end to the conservative regime of Dr. Ramón Castillo. The junta consisted of a group of senior army officers of varying political ideologies and opinions. Some admired the European authoritarian regimes, while others were supporters of the Radical Party; most were practicing Catholics imbued with an anti-liberal and anti-democratic ideology. Some of the GOU colonels had participated as commanders in General Uriburu’s coup in 1930. The officers’ chief goal was to impose a regime, which, by virtue of its moral authority and organizational stability, would be able to avert the political chaos liable to arise with the ending of the war. Fear of communist subversion and the incitement of workers caused these officers much concern.

Among the officers who carried out the coup were those who sought to improve relations with the United States, which would allow arms purchases from that country, and would also promote a change in the strategic balance in South America, which had swayed to favor Brazil because of its pro-American policies.

Two days later, a further upheaval occurred within the junta itself when General Pedro Pablo Ramírez seized the leadership. A declaration was issued clarifying the aims of this second takeover, and the nature of the new regime became clear when the central posts were filled. Several of them went to supporters the Axis powers, such as Ramírez and Basilio Pertiné, the new mayor of Buenos Aires. Others were allotted to figures whose political opinions were unknown.¹

The Argentinean Catholic establishment welcomed the revolution. Its support had originated in the “infamous decade” of the 1930s, since which time the army and the Church had developed close ties. The army chaplaincy

requested priests to deliver sermons and to conduct military ceremonies. Because of the common fear of communism and the search for “social justice” in accordance with Catholic social doctrine, the army and the Church were perceived by many as the two institutions that alone could bring about necessary changes in society. “Catholic Action,” an important lay organization, had great influence on the army; its youth section had branches in military schools. In addition, many serving and retired army officers were active in Catholic circles, and the Catholic element became more significant after the 1943 coup.²

The Church, then, first welcomed the revolution at the highest official level, and popular support was evident in Catholic journals such as *Criteria*, *El Pueblo*, and *Los Principios*, and in nationalist Catholic circles.³ Rawson’s June 4 declaration, in which he set out the reasons for and the aims of the coup, was applauded by the Church, as his program matched its own declared aims. The declaration attacked usury and communism, stressed the loss of values such as justice and morality, and averred that “the children of Argentina have been driven from the doctrine of Christ the Messiah and the education of the youth shows no honor of God or love of the homeland.” The identification of “Catholicism” with patriotism was heavily underlined by the junta.

The following day, *El Pueblo* welcomed “the victory of the Argentinist military movement.”⁴ Franceschi too, in *Criteria*, called upon Argentineans to support the new government which “has come like a breath of fresh air, to clear the social atmosphere.”⁵ The military government alone, he asserted, was capable of meeting postwar challenges, which “cannot be avoided, even if involvement in the war can be.” The need was absolute, therefore, for all citizens to join ranks behind the military government. Franceschi fully concurred with every point in the junta’s proclamation.⁶

Ramírez responded in writing to Franceschi, expressing appreciation for the editor’s sentiments, and stressing that the government he headed was interested in engaging the talents of all “intelligent and responsible” citizens in the “renewed national construction.” Mutual appreciation and the desire for cooperation were displayed by both sides from the earliest stages of the military coup.⁷ Seeking Catholic support, General Armando Verdiguier, the de facto governor of Buenos Aires province, declared that the army had placed its power “at the service of true democracy...a democracy based on the ethics of Jesus Christ.”⁸

The Catholic intellectual elite assumed a high position under the new regime. Many fanatically Integralist, nationalist, and antisemitic Catholics, supporters of the Axis powers, received posts in municipalities, universities, the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education, and Justice; and teachers' training colleges. It seemed like the fulfillment of an old dream—"Integral Catholic Argentina" as an alternative to liberal Argentina.⁹ The atmosphere of victory and a Catholic restoration stimulated an increase in various expressions of antisemitism.

A quite different reaction to the coup was evinced by the Christian Democrats, a group within the Argentinean Church which became a political party in the 1950s. A branch of the European Christian Democrats, they held that it was indeed possible for the Church to be respected in liberal democratic states. They were inspired by Catholic leaders such as Giovanni Sturzo in Italy and by the Christian Democrats in Germany at the turn of the 19th century and later. In the interwar period, they were greatly influenced by the French Catholic lay philosopher, Jacques Maritain.

Christian Democrats did not voice a reaction to the 1943 military coup, although they certainly did not welcome it. As a minority unrepresentative of the Church establishment, they were ostracized and denounced by Church leaders. Their publication, *Orden Cristiano*, was banned from circulation in all schools, all religious orders, and the centers and institutions of "Catholic Action."¹⁰

The coup sanctioned the homogenization of Argentine society; there was to be identity between "Catholicism" and "Argentinism," with no room for internal Catholic pluralism.

THE INSTITUTION OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A decree was promulgated on December 31, 1943 instituting Catholic education as a compulsory subject in all government schools. That day, too, all political parties were ordered to disband. The measures afforded most Catholics much satisfaction.

Three antisemitic nationalists had been actively involved in preparing the education decree—Gustavo Martínez Zuviría (known by his penname, Hugo Wast: see chapter 2), who had been appointed Minister of Education the previous October; José Ignacio Olmedo, president of the Educational Council; and Tomás de Casares, acting rector of Buenos Aires University.¹¹ All three were convinced that Christian education in government schools

would prevent the children of the middle and working classes from being exposed to socialist and communist ideas. These formed the bulk of pupils at government schools. From 1943, then, the dream of “Christianizing” Argentina began to be realized. Delfina Bunge de Gálvez, wife of the well-known writer, Manuel Gálvez, a very active lay Catholic, supported the new directive. She believed it was in the interests of the general populace and the workers, and claimed that “Catholic education will be disseminated without discrimination and will also apply to those who have no rights: the children and the poor.”¹² In view of the promise of providing education to all, even liberal circles did not oppose the new regulations.

After the coup, Integral Catholicism appeared as a force with its own social program, bearing the message of national identity needed for the construction of Catholic Argentina. The coup received the Church’s blessing. The Catholicization of the army and the militarization of Catholicism reached their peak in October 1943, when at the Fourth National Eucharistic Congress held in Buenos Aires it was declared that the army consecrated itself to the Virgin Mary. With the introduction of Catholic education as a compulsory subject in schools, the army and the Church presented a united front in their national and religious identity.¹³

“CATHOLIC ARGENTINA” AND THE JEWS

The coup terrified the Jewish community. The junta was under the influence of nationalists, some of them pro-Axis, for some of whom antisemitism was a central motif.¹⁴ A foremost representative of pro-Nazi and antisemitic Catholic nationalism, Enrique Osés, regarded the coup as a turning point not only for the Argentinean people but for the Jews, too:

In the past, everything was done, passed into law, and translated into action for the benefit of those who belong to a lower species, filthy human beings, who live in ghettos and synagogues. Now, it appears, after the historic date, all will be done, passed into law, and translated into action for the benefit of the Argentineans. Who is responsible for what happened in the past? The politicians, who sold themselves to aliens, and like Judas Iscariot committed treason against their own country.¹⁵

His hostility to the ruling oligarchy and the pro-British stance of previous governments made Osés compare the conservative former leaders to “the treacherous Jews.” He rejoiced at the changed priorities that led Jews to be

dismissed from their posts in the civil service. Indeed, in Santa Fe immediately after the coup, the appointments of many Jews in public service, made by the former governor, were canceled. Only a month previous to the coup, the provincial governor and the Jesuit priest Alfonso Duran had spoken at a gathering of the Zionist Federation of Santa Fe. They supported Zionism, and in writing and speech rejected expressions of antisemitism.¹⁶

The virulently antisemitic periodical *Clarinada*, edited by Carlos Silveyra, habitually published caricatures taken from *Der Stürmer*. Jews were derided and the paper evinced malicious glee at what awaited them as a result of the coup. In an August 1943 article, Silveyra portrayed Jews as fleeing before a storm called “4 June.” A Jew caricatured as a pig and snake was accompanied by doggerel in the Nazi style of de-humanization:

One thousand insects
 President Ramírez swept away
 For the good of the country
 When the storm broke out.¹⁷

Identification with Ramírez’s regime served as a meeting point for a variety of interested groups; many circles expressed support for the president on the basis of a common cultural outlook. In addition to Martínez Zuviría, many of the nationalists appointed to public office were well-known antisemites, among them Alberto Baldrich, Jordán Bruno Genta, Mario Amadeo, Juan Carlos Goyeneche, Samuel Medrano, and Santiago de Estrada. Not all of them displayed the antisemitic obsession of Enrique Osés or Julio Meinvielle. But “rejection, contempt, anti-Jewish humor,” and occasionally pure hatred were elements of the consensus and common Catholic denominator of Hispanic nationalist circles, supporters of Charles Maurras, and pro-Nazis, distinctions among whom were blurred and vague.¹⁸

Expressions of antisemitism became more blatant after the coup. From Jewish sources, it appears that during the time that Dr. Moises Cadoche served as president of the DAIA (*Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas*, the umbrella organization of Jewish associations) verbal violence was the chief expression of antisemitism, mainly in nationalist publications. However, from May 17, 1943, when Dr. Moisés Goldman became the head of the DAIA, he made many outraged protests to the authorities in an attempt to lessen or eliminate the increasing manifestations of antisemitism.¹⁹

Enrique Osés’s prediction that the coup would prove a turning point for Argentina’s Jews proved well founded. Antisemitism, formerly latent, theoretical, and intermittent, became government policy after the coup. A

process of expelling Jews from the public sector, interference with Jewish religious requirements and customs, and legitimizing shrill antisemitic outbursts unleashed at Jews in the street.

The Ban on Kosher Slaughtering

On August 15, 1943, only two months after the takeover by the military junta, Dr. Goldman informed the DAIA steering committee that the government had issued a decree banning Jewish ritual slaughter at the Frigorífico Nacional municipal slaughterhouse. The decree was a blow to observant Jews, and leaders of the Jewish community immediately sought a meeting with the responsible municipal authorities as well as President Ramírez.

Dr. Goldman traveled to Basavilbaso in Entre Ríos province to try to persuade the authorities to revoke the ban, and he also approached General Alberto Gilbert, the Minister of the Interior, but apparently without success.²⁰ The attempt to prevent Jewish ritual slaughter was only one part of the policy of homogenization of Argentine society through the abolition of cultural and religious pluralism. The final goal was to make Argentina an integral Catholic state, and the attempt to abolish pluralism was first directed at the Jewish minority and its religious requirements.

Banning the Sale of Kosher Meat

Despite the intense activity of the Jewish leadership, the ban on kosher remained, and in 1944 the issue became still more serious. On April 20, 1944 Dr. Goldman informed his colleagues that he had requested an interview with the Buenos Aires authorities, following a decree which permitted meat vendors in the city markets to sell only meat slaughtered in the municipal abattoir. After the ban on ritual slaughter, some vendors had begun to stock kosher meat supplied by other sources, and this new regulation would have a serious effect on city meat markets and Jewish consumers.²¹ In negotiations with city authorities, Jewish leaders succeeded in obtaining a delay until the end of May—only one month.

On May 11, 1944, two representatives of the DAIA met with Dr. Samuel Medrano, secretary of the Buenos Aires Health and Supply Department. This official promised to support their request for a renewed permit for ritual slaughter at the Frigorífico Nacional, but the ban remained in force despite continued efforts to make the authorities understand the nature of Jewish customs and the meaning of ritual slaughter.²² The DAIA representatives met

Medrano again, and he promised to reexamine the decree. Medrano, a Catholic activist, was one of the many functionaries of the military government who were founder-members of the Courses in Catholic Culture, whose political activity was the direct outcome of their adherence to Catholic nationalism.²³

Restrictions on the Use of Yiddish and the Yiddish Press

Four months after the establishment of the military government a fresh issue arose that caused great agitation among Argentina's Jews. On October 13 and 14, 1943, the Yiddish-language newspapers *Di Idische Zeitung* and *Di Presse* in Buenos Aires were closed down, on the pretext that the censor was unable to read and censor foreign languages. On October 15, probably as a result of intervention by Jewish leaders, President Roosevelt publicly condemned the antisemitic decrees in Argentina, and they were rescinded the following day.

The Yiddish press renewed operation on October 17, with the publication of a letter of apology to the president of DAIA by Minister of the Interior Gilbert.²⁴ It is still not known if the minister himself had issued the closure order, if it was at the initiative of the censor, or if others were involved.

The question of the use of Yiddish at public meetings still remained unresolved. The ban on the use of foreign languages in public meetings had been imposed well before the military coup—in October 1939. It had been occasioned by the use of Yiddish at an assembly of the Zionist Federation. The ban applied to all foreign languages, and it had spurred E. von Thermann, the German ambassador into intensive action to have it lifted.²⁵

The authorities made it clear that the ban applied “to all foreign languages, without exception,” and this position was maintained by the military government after the coup. The DAIA president repeatedly approached the police authorities for a special license to use Yiddish at meetings and assemblies, and permission was granted for each assembly separately, and individually for each speaker. Permits were issued only solely to the DAIA as the Jewish umbrella organization, but not to individual Jewish groups, all of whose requests were rejected.²⁶ The general ban remained in effect until the end of the war.

The Catholic Religious Education Requirement and the Jews

Changes in Ramírez's cabinet in October 1943 caused further anxiety in the Jewish community. The senior ministers now included two who were well-known as nationalist and antisemitic Catholics—General Luis Perlinguer,

who received the Interior Ministry, and Gustavo Martínez Zuviría [Hugo Wast], who became Minister of Justice and Education. Bonifacio del Carril, secretary to the Minister of the Interior, and José Ignacio Olmedo, president of the National Committee for Education, were also known as antisemitic Catholics.

Yiddish schools had faced discrimination under various pretexts as early as the 1930s, but after the “June Revolution” of 1943 there were recurring problems, initially with moves against the schools by local education authorities. DAIA representatives dealt with these by making a direct approach to the bodies involved.

By August 1943, however, complaints were coming in about Jewish children in government schools being compelled to participate in Catholic prayers. This and other problems encountered in the first six months after the coup led Dr. Goldman to request a meeting with President Ramírez, which took place in November 1943. In a report to his colleagues on December 2, Dr. Goldman said that he had directed the president’s attention to the many contributions of the Jewish community to Argentina. He had rebuffed the various charges laid by antisemites against the community, and stressed the danger inherent in the existence of fanatically antisemitic groups. The president, for his part, declared himself in favor of maintaining law and order, and stated that government would do what was necessary “in order to preserve the unique contribution of the Jewish community.”²⁷

As it happened, Martínez Zuviría resigned as Minister of Justice and Education in February 1944, after the severing of relations with Germany. His replacement by Dr. Alberto Baldrich did nothing to ease the situation for the Jewish pupils.

There was little opposition to the decree of December 31, 1943 that instituted Catholic education in public schools. After all, eighty percent of the immigrants to Argentina had come from Catholic countries, and the decree’s supporters pointed out that even Alberdi—one of the great 19th-century liberal leaders—regarded the Catholic religion as “the basis and means of educating the new population.”²⁸ The emphasis on Catholic education as a means of strengthening national identity was characteristic of Argentinean Catholicism, which perceived nationality, patriotism, and the ethical and cultural values of Catholicism as two sides of the same coin. The era of mass immigration to Argentina in the 19th century provided the historical example of how this content was crystallized to foster social intermixing and

maintaining Catholic hegemony even in the modern world in the era of mass culture.

The DAIA, called a meeting on March 9, 1944 to discuss the problem of mandatory Catholic education. Many leading figures were invited, and a tactic of wait-and-see was decided. Soon, however, the representatives of the Jewish community had to cope with a swelling tide of complaints about incidents of antisemitism at government schools. On March 16, the DAIA central committee was informed by the director of the Jewish orphanage that its children were being refused admission to the local primary school, and an investigation was launched.²⁹ DAIA representatives met with the primary school principal, who agreed to accept the Jewish pupils if the hygiene conditions at the orphanage—which were indeed a problem—were improved.

Meanwhile, a committee appointed to study the educational issue recommended distributing a leaflet to Jewish parents throughout the country setting out the rights granted to non-Catholics who did not want their children to participate in religion classes. Parents were urged to strengthen their ties with the DAIA in order to enjoy mutual support in facing the issues that were coming up. The text of the leaflet was approved, but new problems with the educational system continued to arise.

On May 4, 1944 Dr. Goldman reported that he had met with the education and justice minister about the suspension of several Jewish pupils from a government school in Mendoza. Additional reports to the DAIA concerned expressions of antisemitism in institutions affiliated with the federal Ministry of Education. On June 3, Jewish leaders requested another meeting with Baldrich; in their telegram, they stated their expectations that there would be no repetition of racial or religious discrimination in the school system.

The meeting with Baldrich took place on June 28, and Jewish leaders subsequently quoted him as saying that he did not hold a totalitarian philosophy and that he had never been an antisemite; indeed, on numerous occasions “he had expressed support for Zionism.” He claimed that if his ministry had taken steps against members of the Jewish community it was for specific reasons and not because they were Jewish. He promised that his door would always be open to representatives of the Jewish community.³⁰

In mid-June 1944, Baldrich appointed Jordán Bruno Genta, a fanatical antisemite and disciple Julio Meinvielle, as rector of the National Institute of Secondary School Teachers. A year earlier, immediately following the coup of June 4, 1943, he had been made *Interventor* (de facto rector) of the University of the Litoral in Santa Fe. His appointment in 1944 was

apparently one of the factors behind the dismissal of some teachers, including Jews, in that year. The following year, with the appointment of Dr. Antonio J. Benítez as minister of education, four teachers were reinstated as no fault could be found with their appointments, made in full accordance with the regulations. Two of these teachers, Sanson Raskovsky and Abraham Rosenwasser, were Jews.³¹

Yet expressions of antisemitism continued to beset the Jewish community, resulting in repeated requests by DAIA representatives for meetings with the education authorities, particularly the National Committee for Education. The DAIA demanded that the Ministry of Education activate the option of Moral Instruction for pupils whose parents specifically opposed their participation in Catholic education. In this way their freedom of conscience would be respected and “the pupils would be given moral education.” This option, too, had a religious emphasis, for it taught pupils their obligations to mankind, the family, and God.³²

Spokesmen of the Catholic establishment, namely the editors of *Criteria* and *El Pueblo*, displayed considerable understanding of the need for tolerance toward other religions, since the decree on Catholic education was not meant to be forcibly imposed. The Jewish leadership resolved to draw attention to statements by Catholic spokesmen who publicly supported freedom of worship. A letter of support was sent to *El Pueblo* after it published an article on “Freedom of Religion” in Argentina, and its tolerant commentary on the government decree. A recommendation was made to all Jewish newspapers to reprint this article, and to publicize the full backing it received from the head of the Department of Religious Education in the Ministry of Education, Father Jesús López Moure. Franceschi’s articles on religion and tolerance were also well received, particularly since his conclusions regarding tolerance to other religions were in full agreement with the demands of the DAIA after the opening of the school year in March 1944.

Enthusiasm for the emphasis on tolerance, however, obscured the fact that mandatory Catholic education transformed all non-Catholics into second-rate citizens. Argentina’s Protestant community also brought the matter to public attention.³³ The efforts of government bureaucrats failed to smooth things out, for the published articles on tolerance alone were inadequate to solve problems that arose, particularly in some educational institutions in which pupils were not excused from the Catholic religion classes. Even as late as 1945, Jewish community representatives had to visit several institutions in an attempt to set matters right. Once again, information bulletins were issued to

Jewish parents, requesting them to report every case of discrimination against their children.

Hopes that compulsory religious instruction in the schools would impel the establishment of an Integral Catholic Argentina were hardly realized. But the religious instruction requirement did provide many opportunities for Catholics to enter the school system as teachers and in other positions. It also reinforced the already strong links between the military government and the Church. Jewish children whose parents requested that they not have religious instruction were ordered to leave the classroom during those lessons, and this raised a kind of barrier between Jews and Argentineans. The Jewish leadership condemned this separation between the children, who until then had felt no external differences, and tried to point out the harm that this artificial division caused them and society.³⁴

Evidence of Discrimination in the Capital and in the Provinces

As noted earlier, with the rise of Nazi Germany, antisemitism, with all its traditional, modern, and racist motifs, penetrated Argentina. May Day rallies gave clear evidence of how quickly antisemitic motifs were absorbed by certain strata of Argentinean society, from the elitist right-wing nationalists to the masses of the working class. From 1938 these rallies were organized by the militant nationalist National Youth Front. In 1939, before the May Day events, the Jewish leadership headed by Dr. Moisés Cadoche, requested that the authorities ensure that the demonstrations take place with “due honor to people and all communities”—an allusion to the verbal antisemitism that had been evident in 1938.³⁵

Every year thereafter, the Jewish authorities applied to the Minister of Police and the Interior to deal with this problem, which had become more grave. Reports were also presented to the governor of Buenos Aires province, and subsequently to governors of other provinces, in which the Jews detailed expressions of antisemitism in each area. The issue remained on the agenda after the 1943 coup. The Castillo regime, despite its neutrality in the war, only intensified the deep-seated antisemitic tendencies.

Antisemitic circles seemed to perceive the coup as legitimizing increased antisemitism, and now replaced words by actions in an attempt to accelerate the implementation of the new regime’s nationalist policy. In 1943, popular verbal antisemitism was augmented by a new element—official antisemitism directed by government offices or as the result of local initiatives.

Following the first signs of discrimination, the DAIA president reported on his meeting with Alberto Gilbert, the Minister of the Interior, at which he showed Gilbert the considerable amount of antisemitic material published in the press. Subsequently, meetings were held repeatedly with several ministers, on topics that included ritual slaughter, education, the granting of visas to 1000 refugee children from Europe, and local discrimination and attacks—including the throwing of Molotov cocktails at synagogues.³⁶ There had been efforts made to have Jews dismissed from government service, and preventing their employment generally, as well as participation in sport and cultural activities. On December 2, 1943, for example, Hacoaj sports club turned to the DAIA after having been refused membership in the Amateur Rowing Association for the fifth time, presumably for antisemitic reasons.

The Jewish leadership also had to deal with the closure of some schools in the Jewish settlements following a decree issued on August 13, 1943 which had instructed provincial school inspectors to check whether the Jewish schools were operating in full accordance with the law. In Salta province, performances by the Jewish theater were banned. In the provinces of Tucumán and Santiago de Estrada, too, the Jewish theater was not granted a license to perform, although whether this was because of the ban on Yiddish or simply out of all-embracing antisemitism reasons is not known. Cases of assault by members of nationalist circles were also noted.³⁷

Under Ramírez many posts in the provinces were filled by people drawn from the ranks of Catholic nationalists, particularly evident in Tucumán province. Among those appointed to the Tucumán city council were Alberto Baldrich (who succeeded Martínez Zuviría as Minister of Education), Santiago de Estrada (an adherent of Julio Meinvielle), Federico Ibarguren, whose disdain for the Jews was well-known, Ramón Doll, an extreme antisemite, and Héctor Bernardo, who belonged to the ranks of the “Restorationist” wing of the Catholic nationalists. This group, on receiving news of the severing of relations with the Axis powers January 25, 1944, declared a month of official mourning in the province.

Holding key positions on the councils, men such as these could translate their antisemitic philosophy from theory and the written word into militant action. The anti-Jewish atmosphere prevailing in the city of Tucumán was reported to the Jewish authorities in Buenos Aires. Assistance by the DAIA was also requested from Paraná, where it was reported on March 16, 1944 that the legal adviser of Deguel Yehuda (Flag of Judah) had been suspended, for what were believed to be antisemitic reasons. In another instance, a report

was received from Córdoba, where the *Campaña pro Socorro*—a fundraising campaign on behalf of European Jews—was banned. A number of Jewish doctors employed by the government Instituto del Hospital de Clínicas were dismissed in the first half of 1944. Jewish representatives began negotiations for their reinstatement, and the authorities promised that this would be effected, but this happened only in 1945.

In March 1944, the DAIA was informed that the Jewish schools in Buenos Aires province had been closed, was despite the promise to defend the Jewish community and maintain order that had been given by Ramírez in December 1943 when he had met with DAIA officials.

Clearly, in the atmosphere set by the collective anti-liberal mentality of the junta, the importance of equality under the law was severely diminished. The radical military right legitimized rejection of the Jews, which was translated into a series of offensives against them not only in the spheres of culture, religion, and worship, but also affecting employment. This was, admittedly, not widespread, but restricted to local instances. The authorities were always willing to discuss the matter with Jewish representatives, and each time they promised anew that they would deal with all the problems raised.³⁸

For influential Argentinean Catholic laymen and priests, the removal of Jews from certain posts accorded with Catholic doctrine grounded in writings of the Church Fathers and Thomas Aquinas. The installation of Catholic intellectuals in key government posts resulted in the coalescence of the ideological and political antisemitism of the radical Right with the Catholic anti-Jewish tradition. This created a potential turning point in policy, toward the implementation of official antisemitism in Argentina. Such a process indeed began, with the support of antisemites close to the Church, the central government, and at various administrative levels. The ruling junta largely endorsed accusations made by traditional and modern antisemites, so it was willing to act against the Jews and remove them from public life. However, the central government refrained from adopting a sweeping antisemitic policy as this was not a major issue in the new leaders' outlook but was perceived as an aspect of their anti-liberal and anti-communist philosophy.³⁹

Toward the middle of 1944, Dr. Goldman of the DAIA requested that Rabbi Guillermo Schlesinger of the synagogue of the Central European Jews ask for an audience with Cardinal Copello, the archbishop of Buenos Aires, "to draw his attention to the antisemitic campaign being waged in the capital by sections of the press, including the Catholic press." On June 1, a meeting

took place with the cardinal’s secretary, who promised to apprise the cardinal of the issues raised by the Jewish representatives.

Agitation against the Jews within Catholic frameworks was again evident in March 1945, when the DAIA approached the Catholic Radio del Pueblo, asking it to expunge anti-Jewish expressions in their Holy Week programs on the Passion of Christ. They warned that they would raise the issue with the archbishop if necessary, yet there is no evidence that Archbishop Copello ever intervened in any significant way. He never personally received the leaders of the Jewish community, and antisemitic clergymen continued to express their opinions freely in the Catholic press. This cannot be interpreted as mere apathy on the part of Copello but must be construed as tacit approval of his brethren’s words.⁴⁰

Approaches to Colonel Perón

The cumulative weight of anti-Jewish matters on the shoulders of the Jewish leadership impelled them to approach Colonel Juan D. Perón, then Secretary of Labor and Welfare. His office became the chief channel through which the heads of the DAIA presented the problems of the community. Unlike the archbishop of Buenos Aires, Perón received them frequently, beginning from the second half of 1944. The problems raised by recurrent antisemitism were simultaneously brought to the attention of the Minister of the Interior, who claimed that he understood the matter well and would be prepared to assist if given full documentation of antisemitic actions that had occurred.⁴¹

Heads of the community also met with the director of the Government Information and Press Department, providing him with documentation on anti-Jewish incidents in Entre Ríos province, also submitted to the Minister of the Interior. But these efforts were insufficient to stem the vituperative flow of the flourishing antisemitic press. *El Pampero*, for example, had been banned after criticizing the severing of diplomatic relations with Germany, yet it was allowed to reopen under the title *El Federal* and its antisemitic vitriol was undiluted. The Jesuit priest Leonardo Castellani continued unhindered to publish his anti-Jewish articles in *Cabildo*.⁴² The problem of antisemitism remained high on the agenda of the Jewish community until the end of 1945. Catholic sources make no mention of the discrimination and the antisemitism that caused the Jewish institutions such concern.

Internal problems of the military regime, the fall and rise of Perón, who was arrested and then released as a result of mass strikes on October 17, 1945—all these sparked political agitation and inflamed the masses. Toward

the end of 1945 the incidence of popular antisemitism rose in street demonstrations, including those of the antisemitic nationalist group Alianza, which supported Perón for the presidency.⁴³

The start of the Peronist presidency in Argentina at the beginning of 1946, opened a new page in the country's history, with altered social and political messages, outside the scope of this study.

NOTES

1. Mario Rapoport, *Aliados o neutrales? La Argentina frente a la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1988), 18; Guido di Tella, "Argentina between the Great Powers, 1939–1946, A Revisionist Summing Up," in *Argentina between the Great Powers, 1939–1946*, edited by Guido di Tella and Cameron Watt (Oxford: St Antony's College, MacMillan, 1989), 190–91; Mario Rapoport, "Foreign and Domestic Policy in Argentina during the Second World War: The Traditional Political Parties and Military Regime, 1943–1945," in *ibid.*, 77–105.

2. Fortunato Mallimaci, "Catholicisme et état militaire en Argentine, 1930–1946" (Ph.D. diss. École des Hautes Études, Paris, 1988), 293; Floreal Forni, "Bibliografía," (unpubl. ms., University of Notre Dame, 1988). Public opinion supported the military coup in Argentina. See Rapoport, *Aliados o neutrales?*; Alain Rouquie, *Poder militar y sociedad política en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Buenos Aires: Hyspamerica, 1986) 23, 27–28; Nicolás Repetto, *Mi paso por la política* (Buenos Aires, Santiago: Rueda Editor, 1957), 268–69; di Tella, "Argentina between the Great Powers," 191–96.

3. *Revista Eclesiástica del Arzobispado de Buenos Aires y Sucedáneos* (henceforth REABA), July 1943; *El Pueblo*, 5 June 1943; *Criterio*, no. 797 (1943): 128. The newspaper *Los Principios* of Córdoba was rather circumspect immediately after the coup, but grew more enthusiastic within the first few weeks. *Los Principios*, 5 June 1943; 14 June 1943; 17 June 1943; 24 June 1943. Dr. Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, interview by Graciela Ben-Dror, 23 Aug. 1990, pointed out that the June 1943 coup in practice adopted the ideals of the nationalist movement as represented by his colleagues. Other supporters of the coup were Enrique Osés, Julio Meinvielle, Leonardo Castellani, and Ramón Doll, as well as nationalist Catholic circles; see also REABA (July 1943): 543–45.

4. "Triunfó un movimiento militar argentino," *El Pueblo*, 5 June 1943; Manuel Gálvez, "La Revolución del 4 de Junio," *El Pueblo*, 4 June 1944; 6

June 1943, 1–2; 8 June 1943, 1–2; 7 Aug. 1943, 8; 12 June 1943, 8; 13 June 1943, 8; 14–15 June 1943, 8; REABA (July 1943): 543–44. Mallimaci’s study “Catholicism et état militaire” points out that the army relied on Catholic slogans and content.

5. “La Revolución,” *Criterio*, no. 797 (1943): 128.
6. “Consideraciones sobre la Revolución,” *Criterio*, no. 800 (1943): 149–53. *Criterio* received a papal blessing: “El Sumo Pontífice bendice nuestra publicación,” *Criterio*, no. 805 (1943): 317; *El Pueblo*, 17 June 1943; Luis Barrantes Molina, “Con Dios o con Satanás,” *El Pueblo*, 18 June 1943; 19 June 1943.
7. *Criterio*, no. 800 (1943): 197; REABA (Aug. 1943): 600; see also “Los dictadores de hoy,” *El Pueblo*, 3 Jan. 1943; “Valor de nuestra Revolución,” *ibid.*, 1 Aug. 1943; 15 Aug. 1943; “Distinción entre dictadura y tiranía,” *ibid.*, 1943; Manuel Gálvez, “Acerca de la libertad y de cuando conviene no exigirla,” *El Pueblo*, 21 Nov. 1943; “Derechas e Izquierdas,” *Criterio*, no. 828 (1944): 29–31; “Ante el movimiento militar” (editorial), *El Pueblo*, 5 June 1943; “El derecho a la justa rebelión,” *ibid.*, 26 June 1943; “La mejor colaboración,” *Los Principios*, 14 June 1943.
8. Mallimaci, “Catholicisme et état militaire,” 300–401; *La Nación*, 11 Oct. 1943.
9. Raúl Rivero de Olázabal, *Por una cultura católica* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Claretiana, 1986), 229–35. Manuel de Lezica, *Recuerdos de un Nacionalista* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Astral, 1968); *Criterio*, no. 821 (1943): 304–306; Francisco Tessi, “El catolicismo y la patria,” *Criterio*, no. 807 (1943): 376–78; “La dignidad argentina,” *ibid.*, no. 802 (1943): 245–47.
10. “El Obispo de Río Cuarto, Monseñor Buteler ha dado el siguiente decreto,” *OC* (1 Aug. 1943): 5. This journal had not mentioned the coup since June 1943.
11. “Fue satisfecha una aspiración nacional,” *El Pueblo*, 1 Jan. 1944; *Cátedra*, supplement to *El Pueblo*. *Criterio*, no. 827 (1944): 9; *ibid.*, no. 829, 53–56; “La enseñanza de la religión católica en las escuelas,” *OC* (15 Jan. 1944): 164, 175; *ibid.* (1 Feb. 1944): 179–81; *ibid.* (1 Feb. 1944): 182; *ibid.* (15 July 1943): 3–4, 18. See also Manuel Gálvez, “No se concibe cultura sin el estudio de la religión,” *El Pueblo*, 16 Jan. 1944. On his antisemitic ideas, see José Ignacio Olmedo, *Restauración del reino de Israel* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1937), published with Church approval. As president of the Council for National Education he was assumed to be responsible for the dismissal of Jewish teachers; see *Todo es Historia*, no. 208 (Aug. 1984): 40; and Basilio

Serrano (layman and ACA activist), interview, Archives of Oral History, *Sociedad y Religión*, Buenos Aires, 1986 (directed by Dr. Floreal Forni).

12. Delfina Bunge de Gálvez, *Criterio*, no. 845 (1944).
13. Mallimaci, “Catholicisme et état militaire,” 260–65.
14. Leonardo Senkman, “El 4 de Junio y los judíos,” *Todo es Historia* (June 1983); see also Haim Avni, *Jewish Education and Emancipation* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1985), 91, who claims that “the officers’ coup d’état in June 1943, brought no immediate change in the lives of Argentinean Jewry.”
15. *El Pampero*, 26 July 1943.
16. Yitzhak Harkavi, Oral Documentation, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Project (112) evidence 14; project (171) 2 c, d, p. 24. Also Rev. Alfonso Durán, “Yo no soy antisemita,” *OC* no. 79 (15 Dec. 1944), which was also published in *La Provincia*, Santa Fe, Nov. 1944.
17. *Clarinada*, Aug. 1943.
18. Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, interview by Graciela Ben-Dror, Buenos Aires, 23 Aug. 1990. He confirmed that this form of antisemitism was acceptable in their circles. He also confirmed that Osés’s newspaper *El Pampero*, had the largest circulation. “Revolución: retorno al punto de partida,” *El Pueblo*, 15 Aug. 1943.
19. See *Actas DAIA*, 16 Sept. 1943; 4 Nov. 1943; 20 Apr. 1944.
20. Dr. Goldman provided information about the ban on ritual slaughter on 5 Aug. 1943. See *Actas DAIA*, 16 Sept. 1943; it was reported to DAIA that ritual slaughter had been banned in the town of Basavilbaso in the province of Entre Ríos. *Actas DAIA*, 4 Nov. 1943, Dr. Goldman reported on his trip to Entre Ríos, where he dealt with the problem of ritual slaughter and with matters concerning Jewish schools.
21. See *Actas DAIA*, 16 Sept. 1943; 4 Nov. 1943; 20 Apr. 1944.
22. *Actas DAIA*: 27 Apr. 1944; 11 May 1944; 18 May 1944; according to the Report of Dr. Goldman to the Executive Committee, 6 July 1944; 6 July 1944.
23. Olázabal, *Por una cultura católica*, 108, 125, 168, 195, 196, 208; *Actas DAIA*, 3 Aug. 1944.
24. *Crítica*, 15 Oct. 1943. See also Leonardo Senkman, “El 4 de Junio y los judíos,” *Todo es Historia* (June 1983); *Di Presse*, 17 Oct. 1943.
25. See *MREyC*, Division Política, Alemania, 1940, 1941.

26. See *Actas DAIA*, 30 Oct. 1939; *ibid.* on the request of Poalei Zion to use the Yiddish language at a public meeting, e.g., 29 Sept. 1941; 29 Oct. 1941; 20 July 1944.

27. See *El Pueblo*, 19 Oct. 1943. On the appointment of new cabinet ministers with pro-Axis leanings see Rapoport, *Aliados o neutrales?* 81; “Le verdad sobre allanamientos de nuestra escuelas,” *Asociación de Escuelas Populares Israelitas de la República Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1937); *Actas DAIA*, 5 Aug. 1943. See also “the invitations to resign” from those offices for which they were unfitted as “rootless strangers.” “Invitación a la renuncia,” *El Pueblo*, 21 Aug. 1943; *ibid.*, 2 Dec. 1943 on the meeting between Dr. Goldman and Ramírez. See also Efraim Zadoff, *Historia de la educación judía en Buenos Aires (1935–1957)* (Buenos Aires: AMIA, 1994).

28. Baldrich was perceived by the Jewish community as an antisemite and Axis supporter; see Rapoport, *Aliados o neutrales?* 345; *El Pueblo*, 21 Jan. 1946. Fernando Martínez Paz, *La educación argentina* (Córdoba: Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 1979), 204–5; on Protestant opposition, see Haim Avni, *Jewish Education*, 93–94.

29. *Actas DAIA*, 9 Mar. 1944; *ibid.*, reported 16 Mar. 1944; *ibid.*, reported 23 Mar. 1944.

30. *Ibid.*, 4 May 1944; 8 June 1944; 29 June 1944.

31. Rev. Pedro Badanelli, “Concepto y Actualidad del Humanismo,” *El Pueblo*, 18 June 1944.

32. *Actas DAIA*, 29 June 1944; 3 Aug. 1944; 17 Aug. 1944. *Boletín Informativo de la DAIA*, 11 July 1944. See also Senkman, “El 4 de Junio.”

33. *Actas DAIA*, 29 June 1944; *El Pueblo*, 22 June 1944. On the identification of Rev. Jesús E. López Moure, General Director of Religious Education, see *El Pueblo*, 24 June 1944; “Catolicismo y Tolerancia,” *Criteria*, no. 850 (1944): 557–60; “Quién es mi prójimo?” *REABA*, Apr. 1944. On the Protestant reaction see Avni, *Jewish Education*, 94.

34. *Actas DAIA*, 26 Apr. 1945; Dr. Máximo Yagupski, a leading Jewish activist, interview by Graciela Ben-Dror, Buenos Aires, 21 Aug. 1990.

35. See detailed report in *Crisol*, 4 May 1943: the demonstrators halted at the Church of San Nicolás de Bari with cries of “Long live Jesus Christ!” and “Argentina—Yes! Jews—No!” *Actas DAIA*, 4 May 1939. See the nationalist publication *Combate*, June 1939, with a report on the May Day demonstration of the Alianza, during the course of which antisemitic slogans were chanted; this recurred every year at Alianza May Day demonstrations of the Alianza until 1943.

36. *Actas DAIA*, 25 Apr. 1940; 13 May 1940; 20 Apr. 1942; see also the protocols from 1935 until 1944 of DAIA appeals to the authorities about outbreaks of antisemitism in the streets as May Day approached; see *El Pueblo* on relevant dates, particularly 2 May, after the May Day rally every year. *Actas DAIA*, 19 Sept. 1940; 16 Dec. 1940; 30 Dec. 1940; 5 June 1941. On attacks and explosions in synagogues: 19 June 1941. On November 11, 1943 a meeting was held between DAIA representatives and the Minister of Internal Affairs, about speeding up the acceptance of the children from Europe. The meeting was reported in *Actas DAIA*, 18 Nov. 1943. On the episode of the 1000 children, see Haim Avni, *Argentina y la historia de la inmigración judía, 1810–1950* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press-AMIA, 1983).

37. *Actas DAIA*, 18 Nov. 1943; 2 Dec. 1943.

38. *Ibid.*, 6 Mar. 1944; 4 May 1944; 11 May 1944.

39. It is possible to trace the course of the demand for the removal of the Jews from public life in Argentina on the pages of *El Pueblo*, especially in articles by Luis Barrantes Molina, its official commentator and a member of Catholic Action. Father Virgilio Filippo also had a rostrum in the Catholic newspaper. Personalities like Julio Meinvielle, Leonardo Castellani, and Alberto Medrano were not rejected by the Church because of their attitude toward the Jews. See *Presencia, Balcón, Nuestro Tiempo, Cabildo*. In *El Pueblo*, see “El último libro del Padre Filippo,” 15 May 1941; *ibid.*, 4 May 1941; L.B.M., “Enseñanzas y advertencias,” *ibid.*, 23 Mar. 1945; Virgilio Filippo, “Los falsos justos se creen dioses ante el inocente,” *ibid.*, 30 Mar. 1945, 12., in which he claims that during the crucifixion Pilate’s inner voice called upon him to release the innocent, while the Jewish mob demanded crucifixion (“La voz de conciencia le grita—suelta al inocente; la voz del populacho judío, crucifícale.”).

40. *Actas DAIA*, 11 May 1944. Dr. Elkin’s proposal, to approach the archbishop through Rabbi Schlezinger, was adopted. See *Actas DAIA*, 18 May 1944; 1 June 1944; 27 Mar. 1945.

41. Report on the request for a meeting with Col. Perón. Dr. Goldman reported on 8 June 1944 about the June 5, 1944 meeting with Perón. Meetings took place also on June 15, 27, and 29; as well as July 6, 1944 about evidence of antisemitism in Entre Ríos; and on 20 July 1944.

42. *Actas DAIA*, 17 Aug. 1944; 6 Dec. 1945.

43. *Actas DAIA*, 27 Mar. 1945; 6 Dec. 1945. On events of October 17, 1945, see the Catholic press: *El Pueblo*, 18 Oct. 1945; Delfina Bunge de Gálvez, “Una emoción nueva en Buenos Aires,” *El Pueblo*, 25 Oct. 1945. On

the atmosphere, and for a reconstruction of the times among the Catholic nationalists, see José Luis de Imaz, *Promediando los Cuarenta*, (Buenos Aires: G.E., 1975). Also in *Tribuna* (published by the antisemitic nationalist group Alianza), Dec. 1945 on the occasion of a conference for the presentation of the candidates, see *Tribuna*, 22 Dec. 1945; on cases of overt antisemitism, “Buenos Aires ha ofendido a Cristo,” *OC*, 4 Dec. 1945, 248–50. Although Alianza supported Perón, there is no evidence in his speeches to indicate what was his own attitude toward the Jews.

Part II

The Catholic Church in Argentina and Its Attitude to Nazism and the Holocaust

CHAPTER 5

The Position of the Catholic Hierarchy in Argentina on the Nazi Regime

Hitler's assumption of power in Germany on January 30, 1933 was a turning point whose outcome could not be foreseen in the history of Europe in general, and of the Jews of Europe in particular. The consolidation of the Nazi regime was accompanied by increased antisemitic propaganda in Germany and beyond. Hitler's successes led to a marked change in political relations with large sections of Europe and overseas, where pro-Western orientations were weakened and various pro-Nazi and pro-Fascist tendencies gained strength.

The Nazi anti-Jewish policy steadily gained strength from 1933 onwards. It began with an economic boycott of the Jews, followed by decrees aimed at rejecting them from general German society, accompanied by a well-oiled propaganda machine which proclaimed Jews to be an inferior race that endangered mankind and its future and the chief cause of all Germany's troubles.¹

After the Nazi rise to power, the German Catholic Church began to back away from its pre-1933 ban on membership in the Nazi party. As time went on attempts continued at rapprochement and reconciliation with the new regime in a quest for coexistence and cooperation between the regime and the Church.² Furthermore, the Vatican had laid the foundation for a dialogue with Hitler's regime very early on with the signing of a Concordat between Pope Pius XI and Adolph Hitler on June 30, 1933.³

The worldwide process of rapprochement with Nazism throughout the Catholic world raises important questions regarding the attitude of the Catholic hierarchy in Argentina toward Nazism in general, and its reaction to the worsening situation of the Jews in particular. The question becomes even more important in view of the growing strength of the Argentine Church after the 1934 International Eucharistic Congress, its increased prestige in the eyes of the public and the government, and its close ties with the Vatican. What was the substance of public declarations by the Argentine Church on the

Jewish issue, and how this was expressed in the education of the younger generation, and in its approach to the devout.

**THE STANCE OF ARGENTINA'S BISHOPS
ON THE NAZI REGIME IN GERMANY**

Msgr. Santiago Copello was appointed archbishop of Buenos Aires on December 15, 1932. As head of the most important see in Argentina, that of the federal capital, Copello's public statements are critical for understanding the stance of the Argentinean Church, its particular emphases concerning current events and Catholic teaching, and its attempts to guide public opinion. His official views can be found in the monthly bulletins of the Buenos Aires diocese, as well as in his pastoral and personal letters.⁴

In his first pastoral letter, published on December 18, 1932 soon after his elevation, Copello raised issues concerning the activities of the clergy, the religious orders, and the lay movement, Catholic Action (Acción Católica Argentina). Ideologically and theologically he wished to promote harmony among the classes in accordance with the Church's social doctrine. He opposed the Marxist concept of class war, and emphasized the Catholic approach in contrast to other doctrines. Priests and the lay activists should direct their energies to the social mission in order to avert the manifold perils of individualist liberalism and collectivist communism. Catholic social doctrine, as evolved by Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI, was intended to promote social harmony and the organic development of a society in which the status and natural rights of each individual were guaranteed. Archbishop Copello held that the right to private property was a natural right emanating from the Divine, and all the political, social, and economic tenets were grounded in this right. Deviation from that principle was a deviation from Christianity itself and an attack on its dogmas. He rejected regimes that demanded the separation of religion from the state, for those regimes hurt the Church; the solution was to return to "the world of Medieval Christianity."

Copello's incumbency was one of great organizational activity. Every month a new parish was created in one of the districts of Buenos Aires. Catholic Action expanded its ranks, and the teaching of the catechism to schoolchildren was expanded.⁵

It is noteworthy that official Church publications such as *Revista Eclesiástica del Arzobispado de Buenos Aires* (REABA) completely ignored the Jewish issue. Even after the accession of Hitler in 1933 and the beginning

of anti-Jewish legislation, including the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, there was no official reaction to these events on the part of the Argentine hierarchy, as was the case in other countries throughout the world.⁶ In a country with many pressing social problems and political crises, in which Jews were a minority, this would be unsurprising.

On October 14, 1933 the Buenos Aires diocese published a pastoral letter about the International Eucharistic Congress. Among other topics, one finds Copello's first official reference to the contrast between Catholic philosophy and racial theories, set in the widest possible context, and linked with condemnation of Marxism and liberalism. Despite the broad picture given, this statement of principle was of great importance. Nazi Germany was not specifically mentioned, nor, for that matter, any other country, so the Church's position is seen to be one of doctrine and principle rather than political. Moreover, the small space afforded it in the general context implies a certain hesitation that still existed among the heads of the Church, thus leaving the issue on the sidelines.⁷

On August 1, 1935 an article by Dr. Agustín Barrère was published in *La Semana Católica*, the weekly of the Tucumán diocese, in which he attacked *Crisol* and charged it with supporting and glorifying National Socialism. The Church hierarchy ensured that this article was reprinted in Catholic Action's official periodical on September 1, 1935, a move that attests to its intense consciousness of the dissent within its ranks on this issue.⁸

In Germany, the Nuremberg Laws were promulgated on September 15, 1935, but this anti-Jewish legislation did not arouse any comment in the Catholic Church anywhere in the world, Argentina included. The serious import of these laws was nowhere understood.⁹ By 1936, however, there were already some signs that the Catholic hierarchy was distancing itself from those outspoken Argentinean Catholics who admired Nazi Germany. This was evident in the preparations made for Argentina's participation in a world exhibition of the Catholic press, held at the Vatican on May 12, 1936.¹⁰ Forty-five countries participated, representing Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. Participants were blessed by the pope, who expressed regret that German Catholics had sent no representatives, and denounced communism as the chief threat to the age.

On April 16, 1936, Copello returned from Rome, where he had been raised to the rank of cardinal—the first Argentinean cardinal appointed. In his first pastoral letter following his elevation, Copello made reference to the pastoral letter of October 1931 in which Catholics were expressly forbidden to vote

for any party (meaning the Democratic, Liberal, Socialist, and Communist parties) whose manifesto contained anything that might restrict the rights of the Church.¹¹ His pastoral letters of 1936 addressed various subjects, such as Catholic education, the struggle against Communism, a call to avoid “exaggerated nationalism” and pleas for a just solution to social problems.¹² Not a word, however, did he write about events in Nazi Germany and its policy toward the Jews. In this he did not differ from his colleagues. He emphasized only the immediate dangers threatening Argentina, namely the rise of materialist and pagan philosophies. It is not surprising that he concentrated on issues such as the perceived threat of communism.

The anti-communist stance of the Argentinean Church echoed that of adopted by the Holy See in 1936. Its attitude to National Socialism had also followed the lead of the Vatican from the latter half of 1935. For example, Enrique Osés, the editor of the antisemitic, anti-communist, and blatantly pro-German newspaper *Crisol*, ultimately had not been invited to participate in the exhibition of the Catholic press held in Buenos Aires prior to the Rome exhibition.¹³ A year previously, Osés had been invited by the president of Catholic Action to take part, but then-Archbishop Copello rescinded the invitation. The Catholic hierarchy was reluctant to give support to a paper that printed “Heil Hitler” when the Church in Germany was facing increasingly repressive measures, despite the Concordat that had been signed in 1933.¹⁴

One might wonder if the omission of Osés from the Catholic press delegation at the behest of the Church hierarchy in Argentina also signaled its reservations regarding his strident antisemitic line. This appears not to have been the case. Among those who were represented at the preliminary exhibition in Buenos Aires in 1935, and later in Rome, were the editors of *El Pueblo* and *Criterio*, who also expressed hostility towards the Jews. Antisemitism alone was not the deciding factor in this issue. It was, rather, the dissent of many segments of the Church from the ostentatious pro-Nazi stance of Enrique Osés and *Crisol*.

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF THE ARGENTINEAN CHURCH HIERARCHY

The Church elite evinced great interest in events on the political front, domestic and foreign, and intervened in matters beyond its narrow and local sphere of influence. A pan-American orientation was evident, for example, during the so-called Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay in the early

1930s. The Argentinean Church officially supported the government's call for the belligerents to make peace. Then-archbishop Copello of Buenos Aires made his position clear in an interview with the local newspaper, *La Razón*, in 1933. Thereafter, the Church was active in the search for an end to the conflict.¹⁵ Following the lead of the Vatican, the Church also adopted unequivocal support for the Nationalist rebels led by Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War, from the start supporting the Nationalist rebels led by Franco against the Spanish Republic.

Requiem masses were held at Buenos Aires Cathedral for the Austrian chancellor Alfred Dollfuss, who had been assassinated in France; and for the Poland's president, Marshal Josef Piłsudski, who died in 1935. Even the Italo-Ethiopian conflict drew the attention of the Church, and it quoted the Vatican's *L'Osservatore Romano*, which defended the pope for not taking a public stand on the issue.¹⁶

That the Church was willing to act and react on issues close to its heart emerged from its displays of sympathy or censure, and from the exertion of its influence in local and pan-American affairs through public prayer and pastoral letters or actual intervention. Hence, the absence of any official Church pronouncements on the problems of the Jewish people, increasingly grave from 1933 onwards, can hardly be accidental. This silence was fraught with meaning, for the Argentinean Church was obviously closely following developments at home and abroad.

OVERT ANTISEMITISM IN THE CÓRDOBA DIOCESE

The official publications of the diocese of Córdoba, in Córdoba province, one of the oldest in the country, evince a difference between it and the Buenos Aires diocese. The bishop of Córdoba openly supported *El Cruzado*, the militant Catholic journal of the Jesuits, which week by week disseminated venomous antisemitism. This was an expression of his hostility to the Jews, based on traditional theological charges and on the modern versions of these myths. Between 1931 and 1939 the see of Córdoba openly and wholly supported all the antisemitic stigmas. In contrast to the apathy in official publications of the Buenos Aires diocese, those of Córdoba in the 1931–1939 period were hostile to the Jews. The bishop of Córdoba, Fermín Laffite, openly supported the militant weekly Jesuit journal, *El Cruzado*, which disseminated venomous antisemitism.¹⁷

In March 1934, *El Cruzado* published a statement by the Church heads in Córdoba expressing hope that “the holy year of redemption will encourage the Jews to convert to Christianity.”¹⁸ This of itself was not surprising, since the approaching Good Friday liturgy referred to the unconverted Jews. However, they were exercised by the question of why it was so difficult for the Jews to take this step. The answer, they asserted, was first, that the Jews deemed themselves a superior race, intended to rule the entire world; and second, they hated Christ and inclined to socialist, Bolshevik, and anarchist doctrines; finally, they were greedy and apathetic to religion.¹⁹

Traditional, deeply rooted religious antisemitism was fertile ground for the addition of modern anti-Jewish themes emanating from Europe, particularly from the extreme Right in France and from Spanish anti-republican nationalists. The Spanish translation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, published at the beginning of the 1930s, fortified by traditional opposition to liberalism, materialism and Marxism, enhanced the absorption of antisemitic themes in their new political and economic garb. Further blatant expressions of it were found in the Fascist Party of Córdoba and at the Thomas Aquinas Institute, where nationalist Catholic figures were extremely active. The outstanding personality was the philosopher Nimio de Anquín, a prominent intellectual and leader of the Fascist movement in Córdoba province from 1935.

It must be said that the diocese of Córdoba adhered to the official Catholic position, and in November 1935 published the pastoral letter of the German bishops that had been sent to all the German faithful on August 20 of that year. On the other hand, the see made no comment and expressed no opinion on the fate of the Jews in Nazi Germany.²⁰

Since the Church was by definition anti-racist and bound by its doctrine that solutions must be achieved without resorting to force, it could not support the Nazi German racial doctrine and the resultant consequences inflicted on the Jews. Presumably, then, it was for other reasons that it preferred to remain silent. Nevertheless, the early stages of Nazi anti-Jewish policy were in full accord with the positions taken by the See of Córdoba, as expressed in *El Cruzado*. Without expressly supporting antisemitism, the Catholic hierarchy of Córdoba gave it considerable encouragement by allowing the publication of widely-circulated antisemitic Catholic material.²¹

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ENCYCLICALS ON NAZISM AND COMMUNISM:
MARCH 1937

Mit brennender Sorge on the Catholic Church in Germany

In March 1937, the Holy See published two encyclicals within five days. On March 14, the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* was addressed to the Catholic clergy of Germany, dealing with the position of the Catholic Church in Germany and the significance of true beliefs in the temporal world. On March 19, *Divini Redemptoris* was released, in which Pope Pius XI addressed the subject of communism and atheism. The timing was not accidental—both encyclicals considered problems of religion and worship and the rights of the devout under entirely different regimes. The second encyclical, on communism and atheism, may well have been written as a counterweight to the first, to prevent its being construed as a specific attack by the pope against Hitler's Nazi regime in Germany.²²

In light of the hardening attitude of the Nazi regime towards the Catholic Church, the pope broke his silence, and clearly expressed his dissatisfaction with events in Germany that were gross violations of the July 1933 Concordat. The pope emphasized that, despite their patriotism, the Catholics of Germany were being systematically oppressed by the Nazi regime. Catholic organizations were being disbanded, and the freedom of activity of the Church, especially freedom of its press, had been halted. He accused the regime of destroying the earlier spirit of conciliation with the Church.

The pope stressed the spirit of compromise that had led him to sign the Concordat at Hitler's request. His motives, he wrote, had been to forestall the relentless pressures that had already been brought to bear on Catholics in Germany, and to demonstrate his willingness to support the Hitler regime so as to show the world that the Church did not reject any member unless he left its ranks.

The Church had shown moderation, rapprochement, and hope, Pius XI said, despite the attacks upon it by the German authorities. He rejected the “pantheistic confusion” that diminished the Deity and drew on pre-Christian Germanic religion (par. 7). In the following paragraph, he spoke out against the exaltation of race and the idolization of national leaders. He called on Catholic clergy to defend God’s laws and called for freedom of worship. The pope also defended the Old Testament as part of God’s revelation and not to be ignored or dismissed, as some German religious leaders were doing (pars. 15 and 16). The encyclical voiced gratitude to the German people and the

German clergy, who had shown great bravery and emphasized the belief in a single, holy, universal Church, rejecting the idea of a local, national German Church. Natural law and human-religious law had to be observed, especially with regard to the sphere of education.

The encyclical ended with a bold call to the rulers of the Third Reich to return to the fold, again stressing the principle that the Church strove for the fulfillment of true peace between the German state and the Church in Germany. If that peace should be undermined as a result of unilateral hostility by the Nazi regime, the Church would know how to protect its interests.²³

The Church in Germany should have the right to express its opinion and its Christian moral judgment on essential matters, such as Catholic marriage. This provision was important, for the Church considered Jewish converts to be fully Catholic and hence able to contract a valid marriage with another Catholic, whereas under the Nuremberg laws, anyone married to a Jewish spouse was being strongly encouraged to divorce (which was also contrary to Catholic canon law). Catholic schools and institutions should remain open, and the Catholic press should be free of government control. By the end of 1936, the Catholic press was being suffocated. Complaints made by Bishop A. Bertram of Breslau to the Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, about the increasing difficulty of maintaining contact between the Church and its believers were to no avail.²⁴

The pope, as was his custom, trod a cautious path. On one hand, he justified the encyclical by the pressing need to inform the public of all he knew about the harsh reality in Germany, so that he could not be accused of keeping silent on the issue. On the other, he chose his words carefully, so that he could not be accused of causing a further deterioration of relations with the “erring” leaders of the state.

The pope avoided any hint of a comment that might be interpreted as criticism of the authorities and the Nazi party. He contented himself with reference to the true foundations of Christianity, which contradicted the National Socialist doctrine. He hoped that the encyclical would deflect the Nazi onslaught against the Church and would lead to the *modus vivendi* that he had sought since signing the Concordat in 1933.²⁵ This was, in fact, criticism by the Catholic Church of the false National Socialist doctrine, without explicitly criticizing or rejecting the Nazi regime itself.

Divini Redemptoris against Atheist Communism

The Holy See viewed atheistic communism as evil and barbaric, worse even than the barbarism that prevailed before the coming of Christ. “The immediate threat is atheistic Bolshevik Communism, which aims to destroy the social order and undermine the foundations of Christian civilization.”²⁶ Although the encyclical does not mention Jews, at all, antisemites commonly drew a link between the Jews and Bolshevism.

Several months earlier, in May 1936, as the Catholic Press exhibition opened in Rome, the pope received a group of Spanish refugees. The Holy See, he assured them, continued to safeguard the sanctity of the Christian religion, more than any temporal authority. He had delivered a similar message in his Christmas address that year, in the course of which he frequently warned of the communist peril.²⁷ The pope viewed communism as a dynamic danger, growing from day to day at the behest of sinners. In view of the spreading communist doctrine, it was essential to restate the true principles of the Church. There was still time to save humanity from the “Satanic horror” of communism.²⁸

The non-Catholic press was accused of a “conspiracy of silence” about Communist aggression, encouraged by “hidden forces, which for a long time have sought to destroy the Christian social order.” Because the papal document expressed this in ambiguous terms, it could easily be assumed that the “hidden forces” were the Jews.²⁹

The communist regime of Russia was not to be seen as a temporary aberration resulting from revolution, for it intended to do away with all previous institutions. The regime had destroyed churches and murdered priests, and had brought intense suffering to the Russian people, who were not to blame for the excesses of their leadership. The encyclical exposed the errors and the violence of communism as applied in Russia, Mexico, and Republican Spain. Human society should base itself upon Divine revelation and human intelligence, as taught by the Church throughout the world.³⁰

As an alternative, the Church proposed the Christian system formulated in an earlier encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). In the political and socio-economic sphere, this encyclical called for an end to class conflict; further, a ban was placed on the use of force; the wealthy and ruling classes were urged to behave justly, without exploiting laborers. Christianity preached social justice and Christian love in the economic and social fields, with the application of corporate principles. Business interests and society should work in harmony for the sake of society as a whole.³¹

The encyclical stressed that the Church worked for peace and conciliation between classes, so even in the modern world it was possible to restore the rights of corporations, as in the Middle Ages. The pope wrote: "These rights have now won renewed recognition, are revered by contemporary man, who is attempting, in various ways, to revive them in their original sense." Indirectly the pope commended regimes that were attempting to revive the medieval corporate system, and saw in them the proof of Church doctrine as it might be practically applied. Departure from Church doctrine and neglect of Church instructions, Pius XI warned, were factors that led nations into the trap of secular liberalism.³²

The Influence of the Encyclical in Argentina

What effect did the publication of these two encyclical have in Argentina? Did they hasten or encourage condemnation of Nazi Germany, once it became known that the Catholic press and Catholic organizations had been suppressed, and Church autonomy was threatened? Did the Argentinean clergy come to grips with the communist peril? Were there any differences in how each was perceived and utilized by the Argentinean Church?

A comparative analysis of the reaction to the documents indicates a marked difference in the way the Argentinean Church regarded them. The first encyclical, criticizing the attitude of the Nazi regime to the Catholic Church in Germany, was published in Argentina in an official organ of the Buenos Aires diocese two months after the publication in Argentina of the second encyclical, which condemned atheist communism.³³ *Mit brennender Sorge* was published in full as a papal document with no introduction or comments, whereas *Divini Redemptoris* was preceded by an introduction signed by twenty-one Argentinean bishops and archbishops. This introduction was ready by April 14, 1937, less than a month after the publication of the encyclical. In it the heads of the Church exhorted the lower clergy and Catholic Action to act in accordance with its recommendations.

This speedy reaction demonstrates the insistent nature of the call of the Holy See, as well as the complete identification of the Argentinean Church hierarchy with the assumption that Argentina faced an immediate communist threat. The encyclical served the domestic need to reopen the vigorous anti-communist attack, which had been set in motion earlier. Thus, *Divini Redemptoris* was given immediate attention and precedence. The Argentinean Church published a summary of the program detailed in the encyclical, and urgently requested all its clergy to absorb its contents and

disseminate its instructions, and to make it a regular subject of their sermons. The Argentinean Church also decided that this encyclical should be studied in all Catholic Action centers and circles during that year.³⁴

The strikingly different treatment accorded by the Argentine Church hierarchy to the two encycyclicals seems to reflect the pope's own calls that *Mit brennender Sorge* should be "studied," whereas the second document should be "studied and disseminated"—not only among the clergy, but among the Catholic laity via sermons, lay education, and Catholic Action activities. Furthermore, we have already noted the ambiguous attitude of the Argentinean Church to fascist regimes then in power, and this, along with the fact that the earlier encyclical was addressed specifically to the Church in Germany, may have dampened any efforts to have it more widely distributed.

The influence of Church doctrine as propounded the *Syllabus* of Pius IX, the *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII, and the *Quadragesimo Anno* of Pius XI, was felt throughout these times. Because of the condemnation of both liberalism and communism, however, Catholics might well interpret the encycyclicals as supportive of cooperative economies similar to those envisioned in medieval concepts of an ideal society and seemingly evident as well in modern fascist societies.

At the beginning of November 1937, Catholic Action held the "First National Week of Social Studies" at the initiative of Church leaders who considered it of primary importance to teach Catholic social doctrine that opposed atheist communism throughout the world and particularly in Argentina.³⁵ The Catholic Action monthly stated that the encyclical against atheist communism was equal in essence and in importance to the *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII; it signaled a turning point in the attitude of the Catholic hierarchy in its concern for the weaker classes of society. This comparison of itself lent the encyclical importance of the highest order. Devout Catholics were aware that they faced a crucial time, and from then on, the spotlight was to be focused on the communist peril as the main target.

The First National Week of Social Studies opened with a ceremony at the auditorium of the El Salvador school in the presence of Cardinal Copello, other bishops, and the papal nuncio, Msgr. Dr. José Fietta. The clergy who delivered lectures during the week ranged from nationalist-fascist to liberal, pro-Western Catholics—all united in their opposition to communism.

Msgr. Fietta closed the ceremony with a blessing for Catholic Action, which had become a mighty tide in Argentina, reflecting public feeling. Through this organization the conference lectures were published throughout

the country by the press, which thereby contributed to its success. The nuncio noted that the conference had promoted the establishment of norms reinforcing the stand against theories that might lead to the disintegration of society, and predicted that “the fruit of this week will be of the greatest benefit to the Argentinean homeland.”³⁶

Identifying Communism with Judaism

Today, Catholics look back to the impressive social teaching of the Church as a resource to encourage economic development and worker’s right in Third World countries. Many Catholics today, however, appear to be unaware that in the early 20th century, the notion of “hidden forces, which for a long time have sought to destroy the Christian social order” was all too often interpreted as “the Jews” or “Judeo-Communism” even though this is not evident in the encyclical. Such thinking tended to undermine the true, and crucial, emphasis on workers’ rights. By the same logic, these “forces” could also have been interpreted as referring to liberals or Freemasons who favored modernism. In Argentina, however, there were cases in which the lower clergy contrived a link between the encyclical and condemnation of the Jews, creating the false impression that the pope himself had made it. A striking instance is found in *El Cruzado*, the Jesuit weekly of the Córdoba diocese, in an article that claimed that Pope Pius XI clearly and resolutely condemned “the corrupt dream of modern society,” warning all nations and peoples against the threat posed by the dissemination of pagan and negative ideas “whose source is in Russian and Jewish Communism.”³⁷ In articles published thereafter, commentary on the direct relationship and complete identification between Russian communism and Judaism was never absent from *El Cruzado*’s pages. Nor was this weekly a lone voice. Identification of Jew with Communist became a major theme in Catholic publications in Buenos Aires.

The Salesian Order, founded in Italy in 1859, was in the forefront of making the identification of Judaism and Communism. It was active in education in Argentina, alongside Catholic Action, and took the same stand. The Salesian magazine, *Restauración Social*, presented a three-headed monster—Bolshevism, Freemasonry, and Judaism—that called for world domination. Jews were the destroyers of culture and belonged, at one and the same time, to both the communist and the liberal camps. England, France, Spain, and revolutionary Mexico were grouped together. It mattered not whether in one case the Freemasons were said to serve as the link between

Bolshevism and Judaism, and in another, the Jews were said to be the tie between Freemasonry and Bolshevism. The final result was, in any case, the identical.³⁸

Reports about the suppression of the Catholic Church in many countries (notably Russia, Germany, Republican Spain, and Mexico) also featured regularly in the Salesian publication, through quotations from the Vatican daily, *L'Osservatore Romano*, and those Catholic publications that still appeared in the countries in question. The Catholic reader learned that in Germany “the suppression of the Catholic Church becomes ever more violent” and that “the German police have banned the circulation of many Catholic publications, especially the papal encyclical concerning the state of the Church in Germany.” The attitude of the Argentinean Church hierarchy to Italy was quite different. There the Church had not suffered; its freedom of action had not been curtailed and it was permitted to participate in Mussolini’s Fascist regime. Press coverage dealt only with day-to-day matters, such as the birth rate, social and moral security, or fair wage issues.³⁹

The “wandering Jews” appeared mainly in reports and comments on world events under headlines such as “Communism” or “Jews in Our Country” or simply “The Jews.” These pieces endlessly stressed that “the source of the hatred of Christ the Messiah may be found in the Judeo-Communist ideals.”⁴⁰ Building on the connection between classic themes of anti-Judaism and modern antisemitic stereotypes, the Jews remained their traditional enemy in new garb.

In 1936 the nationalist author Carlos Silveyra set up the Popular Argentinean Committee against Communism (CPACC), which he chaired. His book, *El comunismo en la Argentina* (Communism in Argentina), with an introduction by the antisemitic priest Virgilio Filippo, was widely circulated. Silveyra drew the standard connection between Communism and the Jews. Against the background of an anti-Communist atmosphere in Argentina’s internal policy, intensified by nationalist and antisemitic activists, a witch-hunt began against Jewish schools. In officially authorized searches for Communist organizations the police broke into some Yiddish-speaking schools in Buenos Aires and in the provinces, some of them belonging to the Left Poalei Zion Party. According to the police, they “succeeded” in disclosing hostile communist activity. Textbooks and other materials were confiscated as evidence of subversive activities.⁴¹ Salesian and other Catholic organs reported that the schools had been founded to teach and discuss communism. No sect on earth was as evil and hatred-ridden against

Catholicism, as the communists, they asserted. Only one sect could equal the communists in their loathing of Catholicism, and this was the Jews. The Salesians welcomed the police action, which had led to the discovery of “those centers of subversion.”⁴²

The legitimization of anti-communism, against the background of political events in Argentina, indirectly served to identify Judaism with Communism. The encyclical on atheist communism continued to preoccupy the bishops and Catholic Action. In August 1938, in accordance with a directive from the heads of the Church, an “Archiepiscopal Week for Social Studies about Atheistic Communism” was held. Several of the eminent personalities who had participated in the National Week in 1937 lectured on the same subjects. Significantly, among the new speakers was the priest Julio Meinvielle, whose book, *The Jew*, had been published the previous year.⁴³ He appeared on a panel devoted to doctrinal matters essential for Catholic Christianity, a sign of the indifference of the Argentinean Church to the subject of antisemitism, and quite possibly concurrence with Meinvielle’s views. This was not passive indifference, for extreme and unrestrained antisemitism, founded on theological tradition and modern politics, was quite permissible in Argentinean Catholicism.

In October 1938, the Buenos Aires diocese compiled a bibliography for Catholics, recommending a radically antisemitic book by Dr. Albérigo S. Lagomarsino, said to be of great interest in its presentation of the Jewish question in the wake of the “bloody conflicts in Palestine.” The official brochure of the diocese noted that the book was based on *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Henry Ford’s *The International Jew*, and that “the author tries to investigate and expose the true activities of the Hebrews in the modern world.”⁴⁴ Lagomarsino sought to show how the Jews prospered everywhere by forming a closed circle in which all worked for each other and for their private gain alone, endeavoring to win control and dominate through exploitation of their dual weapon: “capitalism and the press, mammon and propaganda.”⁴⁵

In sum, the Argentinean Church hierarchy overlooked the dissemination of antisemitism in books written in Argentina, and in fact recommended them without hesitation. Moreover, following the encyclical against atheist communism certain Catholic circles likened that danger to that of Judaism. The pope’s condemnation of Bolshevism and communism was at once taken by those circles to be a condemnation of Judaism, even though the pope had made no mention of the Jews. The existence of entrenched stereotypes,

previously deeply buried but now re-emerging, made this association possible.

The legitimization of the struggle against Communism was understood by these circles to be legitimization of the struggle against Judaism and the Jews. The apathy that met the pope's words on the oppression of the Church in Germany, coupled with immediate accord and extensive activity in response to his call for a struggle against communism, affected the thinking of devout Catholics in Argentina. *Divini Redemptoris* stimulated a deeper response, including modern antisemitic ideas as expressed by the Nazi leadership and propagated in Nazi publications, than the response to the state of the Church in Nazi Germany as expressed in *Mit brennender Sorge*.

The anti-communist struggle thus took center stage in Catholic thought and activity from 1937, while the anti-Nazi struggle continued to be disregarded. It is not surprising that Church authorities recommended the antisemitic literature named above, and that modern antisemitism flourished. The encyclical against communism caused a change in various circles of Argentinean Catholicism. Previously there had been two parallel lines, one representing the anti-communist philosophy and the other the anti-Jewish. From the end of the 1930s these two converged and united. The papal encyclical served as a catalyst for the full legitimization of antisemitism in Argentina.

NOTES

1. On anti-Jewish legislation: Saul Esh, "The Background to the Anti-Jewish Legislation of the Nazis and the Beginning of Its Growth" (in Hebrew), *Studies in Holocaust and Contemporary Jewry* (Jerusalem: Institute for Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1973), 142–47; 148–56. On Nazi propaganda outside Europe: Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967, rpt., Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981). On Genocide: Uriel Tal, "The Civil Legal Status and the Theological Status of German Jewry at the Beginning of the Third Reich (1933–1934)" (in Hebrew) in *Studies in the History of Jewish Society in the Middle Ages and in the Modern Period*, ed. Jacob Katz (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1980), 427–45; Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 7–9.

2. On rescinding the ban on participation in Nazi organizations and the absence of any reaction to Nazi legislation, see Heinz Hurten, "Die

Katolische Kirche Zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Widerstand,” in *Beiträge zum Widerstand 1933–1945* (Berlin: Gedenkstätte Deutsche Widerstand, 1990); Guenter Lewy, *La Iglesia Católica y la Alemania Nazi*, trans. by Agustín Gil (México: Editorial Grijalbo, 1965), 48–55, 55–75; H. von Hans Muller, *Katolische Kirche und National-Sozialismus* (Munich: DTU, 1965); J. Cardinal Willebrands, “The Church Facing Modern Antisemitism,” *Christian Jewish Relations* 22, no. 1 (1989): 5–17; Otto Dov Kulka, “Popular Christian Attitudes in the Third Reich to National-Socialist policies toward the Jews,” in *Judaism and Christianity under the Impact of National-Socialism*, eds. Otto Dov Kulka and Paul R. Mendes-Flohr (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1982), 227–52.

3. J. F. Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust, 1939–1943* (New York: Ktav, 1979). Saul Friedländer, “Policies of the Vatican with Regard to the Jews during the Holocaust in the Light of Modern Studies” (in Hebrew), Lecture at Haifa University, Publication no. 3 (Haifa: University of Haifa, 1980), 5–20; John S. Conway, “Catholicism and Jewish People, during the Nazi Period and Afterwards,” in *Judaism and Christianity*, 347–76; *Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale*, ed. S. P. Blét, R. Graham, A. Martine, and B. Schneider, 11 vols. (Vatican City: 1967–1982); Leon Papeleux, *Les silences de Pie XII* (Bruxelles: Vokaer, 1980).

4. Juan Carlos Zuretti, *Nueva historia eclesiástica argentina* (Buenos Aires: Itinerarium, 1972); *Revista Eclesiástica del Arzobispado de Buenos Aires y Sucedáneos* (Jan. 1933): 15, 401 (henceforth REABA).

5. “Pastoral,” REABA (Jan. 1933): 4–14. On the establishment of regional parishes, see “Efemérides,” REABA, 1933–1938. See also *Catequesis* during the 1930s.

6. See pastoral letter of the archbishop of Buenos Aires in the collective pastoral letters, REABA (Jan. 1933): 3–14; (June 1933): 359–64; July 1933: 423–25; (Nov. 1933): 668–76; (Mar. 1934): 160–65; (July 1934): 385–88; (Nov. 1934): 806–10; (Mar. 1935): 144–49; (Nov. 1935): 591–96.

7. “Carta Pastoral,” REABA (Nov. 1933): 670–73.

8. On the exhibition, see *Boletín de la Junta Central de Acción Católica Argentina* (henceforth: *Boletín ACA*), no. 104 (15 Aug. 1935): 529; no. 107 (1 Oct. 1935): 645. On the debate with Osés, see “La voz de nuestros prelados,” *Boletín ACA*, no. 105 (Sept. 1935): 563–66.

9. *REABA* (July 1934): 385–88; (Nov. 1934): 806–10; (Mar. 1935): 146–48; (Nov. 1935): 591–96. On the Nuremberg Laws, see “Aplicaron la nueva ley que afecta a los judíos,” *El Pueblo*, 18 Sept. 1935.
10. *REABA* (June 1936): 427.
11. *REABA* (June, 1936): 423.
12. He was elevated to Cardinal on December 19, 1935. See *REABA* (Jan. 1936): 1–24; (June 1936): 423. See the press (*La Nación*, *El Pueblo*) of December 1935; *REABA* (Jan. 1936): 3—President Justo stressed the “Catholic spirit” of Argentina and its government. See *REABA* (Jan. 1936): 24—Foreign Minister Saavedra Lamas thanked the Brazilian foreign minister, saying: “The great Catholic majority of Argentina....” See also *REABA* (Mar. 1936): 186. Pastoral letters were issued in 1936 on March 10, March 25, May 30, and collected letters of the diocese were issued in October 1936 and on November 26. In addition, a document supporting the Spanish Church was issued on September 4, 1938.
13. In April 1935 the head of Argentinean Catholic Action told Osés that he was invited to the Rome exhibition; see *Crisol*, 12 Apr. 1935, 4. In the end, however, he was not invited. *Crisol* regularly published antisemitic articles in which it openly identified with Hitler, even crying “Heil Hitler” in an editorial of April 1, 1934. Under Osés, it continued its anti-communist, pro-Fascist, pro-Nazi, and antisemitic line.
14. Lewy, *La Iglesia católica*, 13451; Saul Friedländer, *Pie XII et le IIIe Reich: Documents* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964), 5–7; Marcelo Montserrat, “Hitler, Pío XI y el concordato,” *Criterio*, no. 1948 (1985): 373–75.
15. *REABA* (June 1936): 419–20. Copello gave an interview to *La Razón* on May 12, 1933. At the conclusion of the Chaco War both sides expressed their esteem for the Catholic Church of Argentina. See *REABA* (July 1935): 463.
16. *REABA* (Dec. 1936): 804–5; (Sept. 1934): 590; (Nov. 1934): 816; (June 1935): 401.
17. *Boletín Eclesiástico de la Diócesis de Córdoba* (Mar. 1933): 86–87. *El Cruzado* (Apr. 1935): 139 highly recommended this publication, as well as the collection dating from 1934.
18. “Sin Dios,” *El Cruzado* (Mar. 1934): 97
19. *Ibid.*, 98–100.
20. *Boletín Eclesiástico de la Arquidiócesis de Córdoba* (Nov. 1935): 406–13.

21. The official *Boletín Eclesiástico de la Arquidiócesis de Córdoba* welcomed the publication of *El Cruzado*, identifying with its antisemitic content; see *El Cruzado* (Mar. 1933): 86; (Apr. 1935): 138–39.
22. “Mit brennender Sorge,” in *Colección Completa de Encíclicas Pontificias, 1832–1965*, (Madrid: BAC, 1967), 1: 1466–81; 1482–1502 (henceforth *Colección Completa de Encíclicas*).
23. *Ibid.*, 1466–81. Saul Friedländer, *Pie XII*, emphasizes Pius XI’s courage.
24. Lewy, *La Iglesia católica*, 155–92; 443.
25. “Mit brennender Sorge,” 1468–77.
26. “Divini Redemptoris,” *Colección Completa*, 1482–1502.
27. *REABA* (June 1936): 427. On the anti-communist position of the Church from the 19th century, see *Colección Completa*; Pius IX, *Qui Pluribus*, 9 Nov. 1878, *Acta DIIIX*, 1: 13; see also *Syllabus*, Inciso IV, *Colección Completa*, 1483; Leo XIII, *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, 28 Dec. 1878; *Acta Leonis XIII*, 1: 170–83; *AAS* 11 (1878–1879), 369; *Colección Completa*, 1: 224; Pius XI, *Alocución*, 18 Dec. 1924, *AAS* 16 (1924): 494–95; Pius XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, 8 May 1928, *AAS* 20 (1928): 165–78 in *Colección Completa*, 1122–26.
28. *Ibid.*, 1483–84.
29. *Ibid.*, 1484–86.
30. *Ibid.*, 1487–88, 1488–1502.
31. *Ibid.*, 1498.
32. *Ibid.*, 1491.
33. *Divini Redemptoris*, issued by Pope Pius XI on March 19, 1937, was published in Argentina in June of that year, while *Mit brennender Sorge*, issued on March 14, 1937, was not published until August 1937. *REABA* (Aug. 1937).
34. *Ibid.*, preface to *Divini Redemptoris*.
35. *REABA* (Nov. 1937); *Boletín ACA*, no. 159 (Dec. 1937): 700. The decision to hold the *Primera semana nacional de estudios sociales* (First National Week of Social Studies) had in principle been taken earlier. The theme of the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, against atheistis Communism was chosen for the occasion.
36. *REABA* (Dec. 1937): 722–25; *Boletín ACA*, no. 158 (Nov. 1937): 671.
37. *El Cruzado*, no. 1120, 688–89.
38. *Restauración Social, Revista Mensual de Estudios Sociales* has appeared since 1935, produced by alumni of Don Bosco College of the

Salesian Order, who joined Catholic Action; see *Boletín ACA*, no. 178 (Sept. 1938): 549.

39. See *Boletín ACA* (1937): 54–55, 84, 94, 64, 82, 92, 319, 320, 695, 725.

40. See *Restauración Social* (1937): 64, 695, 723–25.

41. From 1937, Silveyra also edited the newspaper *Clarinada*; see Carlos M. Silveyra, *El comunismo en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Patria, 1937), Foreword by Virgilio Filippo, 5–8. On the outlawing of the Communist party, see *REABA* (Feb. 1937): 121–23, which published the text of the December 30, 1936 law to suppress communism.

42. *Restauración Social* (1937): 64; *Criterio*, no. 445 (1936): 35.

43. *Boletín ACA*, no. 178 (Sept. 1938): 564–69.

44. *REABA* (Oct. 1938): 662.

45. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 6

The Attitude of the Clergy to Nazism and the Jewish Refugees

The parish clergy and members of the religious orders were highly active in Argentina. The Salesian and Jesuit orders in particular devoted considerable space in their journals to secular and political issues.

THE SALESIANS: AN AMBIGUOUS ATTITUDE TO THE JEWS

Named for its patron saint, Francis de Sales, the Salesian order was founded in 1859 in Italy by St. John Bosco, famous for his educational work among Italy's poorest children. By 1875, the order began expand outside Italy, establishing itself in Argentina, where it became responsible for a large segment of the Catholic school system, and published its journal, *Restauración Social*.

In articles that addressed current events, criticism leveled against Germany in the Salesian publication was more in the nature of a lecture than a genuine protest. Hitler's speeches were sometimes quoted, both to draw attention to positive aspects, and to criticize elements of Nazi policy. Nazism as a whole was not rejected, only those facets of Nazi philosophy that clashed with Christian dogma. Reporting on the 1937 Nuremberg rallies, the Salesian press quoted excerpts of Hitler's speech on that occasion.¹ At that time, the Salesians largely agreed with Hitler's portrait of the state of world affairs (particularly the menace of communism), although they attributed the catastrophic problems as the end result of a neglect of Christian principles. Hitler's proposed solutions, based as they were on anti-Christian values, were rejected.

Fascism and National Socialism, it was thought, might help prevent Argentina from falling into the hands of communists, although the Salesians asserted that the focus should be on Christian doctrine, around which some form of Fascist regime could be built. Their chief foe was not Hitler himself, but the Nazi racist ideologist, Alfred Rosenberg—"the lighthouse of the

godless Bolsheviks" and "pagans." For the Salesians in Argentina he was the "archetype Jew," "an enemy of Christ," who adopted "the atheist and Jewish Bolshevik methods" in the service of an offensive against Christianity. Besides, the Catholic Church itself had long recognized the dangers of "Jewish" communism:

There is no doubt that the Jews are the founders of communism in our times. We, the Catholics, knew this and taught this long before the Nazis were born and they have discovered nothing.²

Rosenberg's 1937 speech in Nuremberg was condemned in Salesian publications, while that of Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, was greeted with unconditional agreement. Even if was possible to discern in Goebbels's words an anti-Christian trend, his statement on the attempts by Russia to conquer Spain were seen as an example of the spirit of Judaism, for he claimed that "the Jews are the backbone of Bolshevism," a "truth" long accepted by the Salesians.³

The Salesian's also reported on the persecution of Catholics in Germany; among the critics of German policy was Cardinal Theodore Innitzer, the archbishop of Vienna.

The Salesians' ambivalent attitude to the German regime was apparent in articles printed in 1937, which at one time described Goebbels as "a worse liar than the Bolsheviks and the Jews," but several months later praised his attacks on the Bolsheviks and the Jews. While deplored the anti-Catholic measures in Germany, the Salesian journal did not dispute Nazi emphasis on "the Jewishness of communism."⁴ Nevertheless, at the end of 1937, the journal also cited the French philosopher, Jacques Maritain, who rejected the tendency to accuse the Jews of responsibility for all the woes of the world and who stressed that "the Church condemned racist antisemitism."⁵

In accord with Catholic teaching, the Salesians condemned racist antisemitism, but defended the sort of political antisemitism found, for example, in Lueger's Austria:

At the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when the Social Christian party of Austria began an antisemitic campaign, headed by Lueger, it did not fight the Jew because of the fact that he was a Jew, but because he was a criminal. This was a political struggle, an attempt to prevent the Jew, disguised in various garb, from gaining control of the regime. The Jew appears in the guise of the Freemason, the Socialist, the Capitalist, the usurer and the speculator. Lueger

fought only the main deficiency of the Jew, which was completely different from the barbaric assault organized in our times against the Jews.⁶

Thus we see that certain Catholic circles, such as the Salesian order, were able to disconnect between the anti-racist teaching of the Church and the maintenance of traditional anti-Jewish stereotypes, especially those perpetuated in modern political antisemitism.

SYMPATHY FOR NAZISM IN THE SEE OF CÓRDOBA

Unlike the ambivalence of the Salesians, the diocese of Córdoba was notable for its display of sympathy for extreme Nazi antisemitism. Approval for German discrimination against the Jews was given expression in the militant Catholic weekly *El Cruzado*, published by the Jesuits in Córdoba.

In April 1935, the monthly *Boletín Eclesiástico del Arzobispado de Córdoba*, the official organ of the Córdoba diocese, congratulated the weekly *El Cruzado* on its twentieth anniversary, calling it the “constant friend” of many religious institutions and parishes.⁷ This warm congratulation was given after the See had received some 100 issues from the beginning of 1933. Well aware of *El Cruzado*’s style and content, including the antisemitic agitation it stirred up and its habit of reproducing items drawn from Nazi propaganda, their approval attests to their official support. The weekly’s principal message was hatred for the “God-killers” and belief in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. A brutal, calumnious propaganda campaign was directed against continued Jewish agricultural colonization of the provinces, in which the Jews were accused of harming the state.

The militant stand of Integral Catholicism was not directed solely against the Jews, but also engaged in a bitter polemic against Protestants, spiritualists, Freemasons, and communists.⁸ Even so, the hate-filled agitation against the Jews was incomparably worse than the criticism of the others. Not only the Jews as individuals was targeted, but Judaism as a religion.

There was a shift from conceiving the Jews as a dangerous enemy to fomenting a fierce and militant campaign against them. The anti-Jewish legislation and the boycott that had been instituted in April 1933 in Nazi Germany were seen as a model for imitation by circles within the Catholic clergy of the Córdoba diocese. Argentinean Catholics were told that the Jews had attempted to assassinate Hitler, but “because of excellent, ethical and patriotic police officers the plot was foiled in time.... And imagine that in our

province we have to suffer the lamentations of morons who weep at ‘Hitler’s assault on the ‘persecuted people.’”⁹ “The chief merit of Hitler’s regime is that it was the first to issue a genuine alarm against Jewry.”¹⁰ The German model was the hope for the future, because, in the Jesuits’ opinion, the Jews were “the great enemy.”¹¹ Moreover, they welcomed the fact that “all nations of the world will, sooner or later, decide to free themselves of the red Jewish filth and Freemasonry....”¹² They repeatedly claimed that the Jews controlled the Argentinean and world economy.

Clearly, then, in the 1930s the Jesuits identified the opponents of the Nazi regime in Germany—communists, Jews, and liberals—with the traditional enemies of the Catholic Church, chiefly on the grounds of the “communist peril.” In the second half of 1934, the overt and public identification of the Córdoba clergy with the Nazi policies developed apace.¹³

Nazi propaganda infiltrated into Argentina through the pipelines of the National Movement and the Catholic Church, which exploited it for its own ends. Some sections of the nationalist press in Argentina hired themselves out to the German Embassy, and were paid to convey the Nazi message. The Catholic Church, remaining independent, did so gratis, fully accepting its validity. Clergy in Córdoba did not differentiate between Jews and Freemasons. They accused them all of planning a world war, from which they would profit. Their conclusion was that no credence should be given to slogans such as “pacifism and demilitarization” because they were backed by the Jews who incited to war.¹⁴

The message passed on to devout Catholics was formulated in generalized abstractions, which made it more easily absorbed by the popular masses. Nazi propaganda pervaded all Church publications, which molded Catholic public opinion in the entire province. Yet parallel to this, the Church faithful were informed that the Vatican had banned Alfred Rosenberg’s *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, while echoes of the condemnation of racist theory also reached Argentina and were accepted as obligatory doctrine by the local clergy. But apart from this solitary condemnation, there was no change in the basic tendencies, which grew stronger as the decade progressed, depicting the Jews as rulers of the world, especially in the communications media and telegraphic agencies.¹⁵ The antisemitic message to the faithful was simplistic and inspired by *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The devious Jewish brain was behind everything, the seen and the hidden:

Marxism is Jewish in its source, and its methods and actions are assisted by the Freemasons, which, too, is a Jewish movement that

serves the mission of the great capitalists, whose financial and international links cover the face of the earth.¹⁶

Excerpts from Hitler's speeches began to appear in *El Cruzado*. Thus, despite Catholic reservations on the issue of "race," the warning that the Jews threatened to poison the blood of the Argentinean people was driven home week after week. The faithful Córdoba Catholic learned from Hitler's mouth itself by way of the local Catholic press that "as long as the Jewish intellectuals poison our lives and the blood of our nation, there is no guarantee of the destiny of the worker and farmer in Argentina."¹⁷ In successive weeks, the paper declared that there was no point in wasting pity on the Jew as a member of "the persecuted race"; Catholics should be forewarned against them and choose Hitler's way to defend Catholicism against the infiltration of communism and the destruction of Christian culture. This was depicted as an immediate danger threatening Argentina, as evidence by the Socialist newspaper, *La Vanguardia*, backed, it was claimed, by Jews and the Jewish member of Congress Enrique Dickman.¹⁸

The campaign of the Córdoba Catholic clergy, linking Jews and Judaism to Marxism, Leninism, and "Zionism," was in effect influenced by an anti-Jewish tendency within the German Catholic Church. The German Church was generally wary of the Nazi goal of transforming it into an instrument to serve state policy. It remained steadfast and defended its basic rights against Nazi attempts to blur the differences in outlook between the Church and the state as part of its plan to establish a totalitarian regime. Yet when the process of removing the Jews from German society began, in the earliest stages of the Nazi regime, the German Church kept silent.

In the Córdoba diocese the lower clergy did not limit itself to educating the masses through ideological articles, but it seasoned them with antisemitic jokes aimed at identifying the Jew with the communist, the unpatriotic traitor. This satanic mélange only served to increase hatred of the Jews.¹⁹ The irony and ridicule in these antisemitic jokes amplified anti-Jewish instincts latent in the emotional and irrational spheres of the devout. The observant Catholic saw his enemy in ridiculous and contemptible situations, perceiving him as a treacherous, fearsome, and threatening spirit, and the anxiety over its power was formidable and dreadful. The Córdoba diocese wished to go on with the publication of the militant Jesuit Catholic weekly *El Cruzado* throughout the province, and instruction in Church doctrine concerning the Jews continued with its full, if indirect, approval.

At the end of 1934, after the Eucharistic Congress, the bishop of Córdoba was elevated by papal decree to the dignity of archbishop. This gave the diocese of Córdoba equal rank to Buenos Aires and increased its influence throughout Argentina.

In 1935, antisemitic Catholics in Córdoba opened another offensive, with the official seal of approval of the archbishop. They unleashed a barrage of excerpts from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which they called the “constitution of the Jews.”²⁰ In addition, they stirred up the issue of Jewish immigration to Argentina:

In the capital people are complaining about two things: the influenza...and the Jews. We pity them. Not the Jews, of course, but the people of Buenos Aires. These people bring with them all the muck and slime of “the persecuted people,” as if until now there were too few kikes, to the regret of the country.²¹

Christian love did not seem to apply to the Jews in the eyes of the Córdoba clergy, who made persistent attempts to dehumanize the image of the Jew and to suggest an unbridgeable gap between Christianity and Judaism under the slogan “Rome or Moscow, the New Testament or Zion, Jesus Christ or Satan,” and “the immediate threat to Argentina.”²² Thus the world was divided into good and evil, Gog and Magog, light and darkness. Not surprisingly, Germany was perceived as an example of how to deal with the Jews—encouraging them to leave the country and placing increasing restrictions on their lives in Germany. The theoretically forbidden racist stereotype appeared, too, in the image of the “usurious Jew” or “the Jew with the parrot-beak nose” who cheats small children.²³

The Spanish intellectual, Ramiro de Maeztu, a radical monarchist, was quoted; he claimed, in his attacks against supporters of the Republic: “...we know that in all countries the Freemasons serve the Children of Israel and the Jewish race.”²⁴ Not only in Córdoba, the Argentinean clergy is known to have identified Franco’s nationalist forces in Spain, which were supported by the Church.²⁵

In sum, the anti-Jewish myth of world domination fell on fertile ground. The “God-killers” were perceived as a single entity disguised as liberals, communists, Freemasons, and ordinary Jews. Catholic publications in the Córdoba diocese, such as *El Cruzado*, were strongly identified with Nazi Germany’s anti-Jewish policies, although as Catholics, they were obliged to disavow Nazi racism *per se*. The general hostility fostered against Jews

proved to be a factor in shaping Argentina's foreign policy, especially in regard to refugees.

CATHOLIC ATTITUDES TO REFUGEE ISSUES

The Evian Conference, called at the initiative of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the first half of July 1938, was intended to bring about a solution to the worsening problem of refugees following the annexation of Austria to Germany. Another purpose was to relieve conflicting pressures on the president regarding America's own immigration policy. While concerned about the fate of German Jewish refugees, the U.S. government was bound by existing immigration quotas.

Immediately after the Evian Conference, Argentina closed its doors to all potential immigrants, even though its potential to assist them had grown. Of interest is whether unofficial public opinion in Argentina was consistent with official policy, as well as the official and unofficial posture of the Argentinean Catholic Church on the fate of Jewish refugees at this critical time for the Jewish people, and how the Church hierarchy molded public opinion on these matter through its official organs.

Attitudes to the Anschluss and the Expulsion of Austrian Jews

The Jews of Central Europe came under increasing pressure to emigrate in 1938. In that fateful year, the problems of resettling Jews outside Germany and Austria after the Anschluss could no longer be ignored.

The Argentinean Catholic press expressly rejected the German annexation of Austria. Throughout the 1930s, the Buenos Aires Catholic newspaper *El Pueblo* had seen the Dollfuss regime as the ideal realization of Catholic social doctrine as proposed by Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* and by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno*. In the face of the "Austrian tragedy" the Catholic Right accused the entire world of "collaboration" with Nazi Germany because of the nations' unwillingness to go to the aid of the Austrians and prevent the annexation. *El Pueblo*'s editorial writer went so far as to equate the danger of Hitlerism with that of communism. This comparison became a guideline in subsequent analyses of German policy.²⁶

The Catholic media tried to explain events in Europe through theological rather than political arguments, chiefly citing "the deviation from the path of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which could cause another world war."²⁷

In contrast to the newspaper's empathy for the Austrian nation when it was enveloped by the Nazis, its unsympathetic attitude to the "Jewish Question" remained quite unchanged. *El Pueblo* reporters made no attempt to explain the background and reasons for the expulsion of Austrian Jews immediately after the Anschluss, even though this information was available. There was only a brief, dry report on "the flight of Austrian Jews to Poland" on the inner pages of the foreign affairs section. No editorial comment on the injustice of the expulsion appeared; it rather seemed like an event the Jews had brought upon themselves.²⁸ Other items mentioned the "mass arrests among the financiers of Vienna, most of whom were Jews," providing no background to the story, nor indicating that racist antisemitism was at the root of the arrests. Such indifference to the Jewish fate had been evident in Argentina even before the Anschluss. In January 1938, for example, there had been an unprecedented expulsion order issued to all Jews in Ecuador. Msgr. Gustavo Franceschi, editor of *Criterion*, had stressed his agreement with the steps taken by that country's government.²⁹

After the Anschluss the accepted explanation for expulsion given by Catholic and nationalist circles were different in tone but not in substance—that the Jews were not the victims of persecution but the cause. The Evian Conference served only as a catalyst for anti-Jewish feelings long entrenched in Argentina. The Jews at that time were occupied with deflecting the waves of antisemitism that swept the country, with refuting the content of the many antisemitic and pro-Nazi periodicals, and with demolishing the stated positions of well-known and strongly antisemitic Catholic personages. But the greatest energies of the Jewish press were committed to the struggle against the persecution of the Jews under the Third Reich.³⁰

The campaign waged in the Jewish press against expressions of racist antisemitism in Europe was described by spokesmen of the Church as "an expression of hatred, which can only be compared with the Nazi propaganda itself."³¹ Franceschi emphasized a similar approach, equating Nazi hatred with Jewish hatred, and made no attempt to differentiate between the content and nature of the attackers and the attacked. On the contrary, his analysis aimed at creating a clear-cut barrier between Christianity on the one hand, and all other religious and ideological outlooks on the other, including Judaism and Nazism.

The Catholic Demand to Reject Jewish Refugees

When the Evian Conference assembled, the chief spokesmen of the Catholic Church attempted to turn public opinion against Jewish immigration to Argentina. In an article entitled “Once again the Jewish Problem,” Franceschi absolutely distinguished the racist antisemitism in Germany and anti-Jewish feelings in Argentina. In Germany, in his opinion, antisemitism was an expression of hatred and pride, but Catholics were forbidden to hate. Therefore, the anti-Jewish approach in Argentina arose from the need for “self-defense” against the Jews. In the same way as Catholics rejected injustices inflicted upon the Jews, so they rejected “Jewish exaggerations.” This meant that any addition of Jews to the country that might ensue from pressure put on Argentina at the Evian Conference would have catastrophic results. “In spite of Argentinean generosity, there did exist a Jewish problem” which was keenly felt, and the rejection of the Jews was no more than a justified demand to seek a more just solution to this problem.³² There was need for sensitivity to the fact that a demand for the sealing of Argentina against Jewish immigration would be interpreted as an expression of antisemitism, so care would have to be exercised in its phrasing.

Spokesmen of the Jewish community at that time linked antisemitism only to Nazism, and not with Catholicism, perhaps because they did not have, or preferred to suppress, a real grasp of the situation, in keeping with the liberal tradition they thought was deeply rooted in Argentine society.³³ In fact, Nazi propaganda had been well absorbed by wide circles of Integral Nationalist Catholicism. The Argentinean Church had not at that time endorsed a unified position on Nazism. Officially, as early as 1935–1936 it had rejected all links with Catholic supporters of Nazism who were organized in Integral Nationalist Catholic circles.

Ignoring the widespread pro-Nazi propaganda and the hostile attitudes toward the Jews at that time, those close to the Church saw the Jews as scattered among many countries without truly belonging to their host nations. Franceschi, for instance, found support in the writings of Theodore Herzl, the founder of political Zionism. A Jewish problem only arose with the arrival of Jewish immigrants, and antisemitism was merely society’s defense against problems caused by the Jews’ presence. Franceschi wrote, “The Jewish problem exists wherever the Jews are a sizeable section of the population.”³⁴ In Argentina at the time, Jews were roughly 250,000–300,000 of a population of some 30,000,000, or about 1 percent. He pointed out that in Germany before the Anschluss, there were 600,000 Jews. Speaking for the Argentinean

Church, Franceschi issued a solemn warning against the expected outcome of the Evian Conference, then in progress (July 1938):

We must beware and warn against international conferences such as the Evian Conference.... The Jewish problem is a national problem, in addition to being a religious, social and economic problem.³⁵

Integral Catholics thought Jews lacked any sense of commitment to their host countries, with their primary loyalty to the Jewish community, thus creating a kind of Jewish state within the state. Moreover, Jews were accused of exploiting the societies which gave them shelter. Any increase in Jewish immigration, it was claimed, would inevitably lead to a virulent antisemitism and subsequently, the “mass expulsion of the Jews, as in Rumania and Germany.”³⁶ This message was designed to create a community of interest between the veteran Jewish and the other citizens of Argentina in opposition to new Jewish immigration.

Malicious antisemitism was openly expressed in circles of the nationalist Right, and long before the Evian Conference, the closure of Argentina to Jewish immigration had been demanded by professed Catholics and those who obscured their Catholicism behind the approach of “politics before all” (*politique d’abord*) in the style of Charles Maurras, whose writings had a profound influence on nationalist Catholics in Argentina. Not surprisingly, an editorial in the rightist antisemitic newspaper *La Fronda* warned that “Waters from Evian bring typhus.” The heads of the Church and its spokesmen were well acquainted with the growing tide of antisemitism in Argentina, for during and after the Evian Conference the antisemitic press ceaselessly attacked the Jews and demanded the prevention of their entry into the country.³⁷

Statements in the Catholic press close to the Church hierarchy were far more restrained. *El Pueblo*, gave wide coverage to the conference in daily reports, but called for legislation that would defend the homeland from immigration “which could endanger it from the physical, moral and ideological point of view.” In fairness it must be said that the reports in *El Pueblo* were brief and reserved, and did not express an opinion about the facts themselves. On the other hand, the speech of the Argentinean delegate was widely covered; Tomás Le Breton referred to the hospitality that had characterized Argentina throughout the years, and insisted that Argentina had done more than others to aid immigration.³⁸ In contrast to the Buenos Aires Catholic daily, the Catholic newspaper in Córdoba, *Los Principios*, openly

displayed its anti-Jewish position under the headline “Semitism is a danger to the entire world.”³⁹

The liberal press in Argentina stressed the contortions of America and Great Britain in their attempts to evade pressure to cancel the U.S. immigration quotas and for Britain to open the gates of Palestine to Jewish refugees. This was interpreted as a blatant attempt to direct the flow of refugees to Latin America. The establishment of the “Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees” in an attempt to disguise the failure of the Conference and to appease the conscience of nations, was received with satisfaction by various Catholic circles, who understood that there was nothing binding in the statement of the committee.

On July 28, 1938, only two weeks after the Evian Conference, the Argentinean government published new regulations aimed at sealing the gates of the country even as Le Breton’s “humanitarian” speech was still fresh in the minds of all the Evian participants. The word “Jew” was not specifically mentioned, but it was clear that the majority of the refugees seeking asylum, by legal or by illegal immigration, were Jews.⁴⁰

The new regulations were welcomed by the Catholic press, and the closed-door policy was called “the correct immigration policy.” Franceschi affirmed that U.S. President Roosevelt had called the conference at Evian with the “generous” motive of finding shelter for all refugees anywhere except in the United States, and had earmarked the countries of Latin America as the safe haven for the masses of aliens.

The ethnic and economic justifications given by the Argentinean government for its actions were understood by Catholics as having been taken for the good of the workers of Argentina. By 1938, the country was beginning to recover from the economic depression, and there were fears that any population increase would only lead to more unemployment. It was thought that “severe damage” had been caused by the policy of non-selective immigration in force until then, even after the limitations already imposed in the early 1930s.

For Argentinean Catholics, the 19th-century liberal slogan, “To rule is to populate,” was to be changed to “To rule is to populate selectively.” Even if the expression “populate selectively” was neutral in tone, no doubt remained that after the Evian Conference and the government’s regulation it was intended mainly against the Jews. Furthermore, immigration was only to be encouraged for specific colonization projects designated by the government. Preferred immigrants were those who could benefit the country in general, so

preference should be granted to those who “accept the ways and customs of our life, who are most easily assimilated.”⁴¹

After the conference, *El Pueblo* explicitly demanded that Jews be prevented from entering the country.⁴² Whereas Franceschi had stressed the ethnic, cultural, and religious nature of those who did not fit into the country (meaning the Jews), *El Pueblo* emphasized economic reasons (which also worked against Jewish immigrants), and approved the new regulations, adding that “in the meantime, no further Jewish immigration would be permitted.”⁴³ *El Pueblo*’s restrained and rather dry tone was representative of the Church hierarchy. Franceschi could be more outspoken, aware that he was molding opinion acceptable to the heads of the Church. While *El Pueblo* reiterated that the regulations were not directed specifically against Jews, it also mentioned that the Catholics of Córdoba welcomed the fact that the government issued these regulations against “pernicious elements.”⁴⁴

The Increase of Antisemitism after the Evian Conference

The Catholic press did not stop at opposition to further Jewish immigration, but indulged in a public debate with any who expressed sympathy for the Jews. Those who opposed and condemned the anti-immigration regulations were called “raucous voices” emanating from “anachronistic liberalism and from the Jews....” and expressing “romantic materialism, on the one hand and special interests on the other.”⁴⁵

One public debate concerned the Committee against Racism and Antisemitism established in 1937 and whose first congress was held on August 6, 1938. Participating in the congress were liberal and left-wing parties and organizations, both Jewish and non-Jewish. They included the Socialists Workers’ party, the Socialist Party, the Argentinean League for Human Rights; the Organization of Intellectuals, Actors, Authors, and Journalists; the Printing Workers Union, the Communist Party, the Popular Organization against Antisemitism, the Argentinean Jewish Club, and others.⁴⁶ Franceschi bitterly denounced the Argentinean Left which publicly supported the Jews and protested the crimes of the Nazis. Sarcastically dubbing it the “Congress ‘Against’ and ‘Anti,’” he gave vent in blunt language to views previously unexpressed in *Criterio*, keeping abreast of the escalation of antisemitism in Argentinean Catholicism, for whom he was an important spokesman.

Nominally, Franceschi tried to tread the objective golden path of Argentinean Catholicism, but in reality, in 1938 he defined Judaism and

Nazism as two racist philosophies identical to each other in nature. For the first time Franceschi used the terms “Hebrew racism” and “the aggressive Semitism of the Jews.” He criticized the Congress for adopting a one-sided position by attacking “pagan racism”—Nazism, only to prefer “Hebrew racism.” The equation of Nazism with Judaism led him to the conclusion that “the Congress, which had set out to be anti-racist, became a racist Congress in favor of the Jews.” The term “semitism” became a synonym for “Jewish racism.”

The condemnation of fascism and racism upset the editor of *Criteria*, who rushed to the defense of those attacked by speakers at the congress. “They were attacked,” he proclaimed, “on account of their opposition to national racism within us, for which the Jews, who live among us, are to blame.”⁴⁷ He also declared that the call to relax limitations on immigration, to increase the population, and to open the gates to refugees who suffered political and racist persecution were all opposed to Catholic philosophy. The congress organizers were “racists” and “Marxists,” and “anti-Argentinean” who were promoting revolutionary subversion by the left:

The absorption of additional Jews, to the limits of the ability of the State will cause the outbreak of virulent antisemitism and this would provide a fine reason to attack our religious-social tradition and advance the cause of social revolution on the pretext of defense against racist and totalitarian doctrines.⁴⁸

As we saw, the pope’s March 1937 condemnation of Nazi totalitarianism and atheist communism guided the Argentinean and Church worldwide into rejecting the possibility of a coalition with liberals and the Left against the Nazis. *El Pueblo* strongly objected to the attempts by the congress to label all its opponents fascists. The editors declared that for them, Catholic believers could be democrats from the social point of view, yet politically support monarchical or republican regimes, or even modest dictatorships like that of Franco. “The Catholic is forbidden to be antisemitic, but concepts must be clearly defined. The congress, however, has blurred concepts, which has caused the distortion of positions.”⁴⁹ The ambivalence of the newspaper’s editors is abundantly clear: on the one hand they claimed not to be antisemites, while on the other they rose to the defense of the most famous antisemitic writer in Argentina, Hugo Wast, who was assailed by speakers at the congress.

The fierce public debate did not help to ease matters for Jewish refugees. The opinions of the nationalists, the Catholics, and the antisemites were

supported by government leaders, who identified with their stand, albeit not publicly. The government also won plaudits from the extremist antisemitic press.⁵⁰

In sum, Catholics in Argentina opposed mass immigration for ethnic and economic reasons, although the economic reasons appear to have served merely as camouflage. In 1936, for example, Archbishop Copello of Buenos Aires spoke before the pope and pointed out the steady economic progress made in Argentina. In the middle of the 1930s, he said, “we live in a Garden of Eden upon earth, compared with the situation that unfortunately exists in many other countries.”⁵¹ His speech was printed in full in the official publication of the Buenos Aires diocese, as was a speech delivered to the parliament by the state president Justo on July 7, 1936, in which he declared that the country was advancing towards a better future, “thanks to its great wealth, spread out over its wide spaces, and thanks to God’s benevolence.”⁵²

Indeed, Argentina had recovered from the world depression by the beginning of 1935, and historians of the period describe industrial growth and economic expansion already in 1935–1937, compared with the stagnation of 1914–1935. The period of Justo’s presidency has been defined as the stage when Argentina began the transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy.⁵³ Accordingly, while the government’s policy of restricting immigration was explained not only by economic but also by ethnic factors, the Catholic Church supported it on ethnic, religious, and cultural grounds. The shadow of the times and the need to defend against the communist peril, in the eyes of Church leaders, added momentum against Jewish immigration.

There is no clear-cut evidence from official documents for a decisive influence by the Church on the decision makers after the Evian conference to bar Jews from entering Argentina. The Catholic press, however, were seen to be the Church leadership’s means of shaping of public opinion. The weekly *Criteria* and the daily *El Pueblo*, for example, first expressed reservation, then went on to issue strident warnings against the entry of Jews. How far the generation of an anti-Jewish atmosphere became a significant factor in the government decision making is difficult to gauge with certainty. For Catholics and most other groups in the nationalist movement, Jewish immigration was undoubtedly an immediate and cardinal problem. While one encounters nuances of opinion about the matter, there are no essential differences of opinion. The consensus against Jewish immigration—deemed to imperil the state—embraced all without exception.

In this atmosphere, public opinion could influence the decision makers to be wary of “undesirable” (*indeseables*) immigration, dangerous to Argentina even if no direct links were visible. In fact, a kind of consensus arose in Argentina that acquired highly vocal expression through the nationalist movement and the Catholic Church. The firm ties between the heads of the church and the state officials may explain their united stance against Jewish immigration, even if there is little evidence in their public statements.

It is also the case that the liberal press in the state was not very sympathetic to Jewish immigration. Apart from the journal *Contra* of the *Comité contra el Racismo y el Antisemitismo* (Committee against Racism and Antisemitism), and its regular bulletin *El Corresponsal Argentino*, liberal journals such as *Crítica*, *Noticias Gráficas*, *La Nación*, and *La Prensa* added their voices to those against the illegal infiltration of immigrants to Argentina after the Evian Conference and *Kristallnacht*.⁵⁴ Of course, the majority of illegal immigrants were, in fact, Jews, a situation that was the direct result of the closed-door policies in many countries, not only Argentina. The attitude toward immigrants—both legal and illegal—was certainly influenced by the anti-Jewish stereotypes. Precisely when Jewish immigrants were most in need of solutions, the gates of Argentina were inexorably closing.

NOTES

1. *Restauración Social* (1937): 319.
2. Ibid., 319–20. These excerpts from the article are cited to demonstrate the treatment given to Hitler’s speech. The original is longer and more detailed.
3. Ibid., 320.
4. Ibid., 320.
5. Ibid., 695.
6. Ibid., 695.
7. *El Cruzado, Semanario Católico Militante*. We reviewed this publication of the Jesuit order in the Córdoba diocese, which reached all religious institutions in the province. As it had the approval of the bishop, it may be accepted that it expressed the opinions of the Church there from 1932 until 1945. See *El Cruzado*, no. 875, 412; no. 883, 63; no. 886, 86; no. 889, 110; no. 897, 5. On the opinions of the diocese hierarchy, see *Boletín Eclesiástico de la Diócesis de Córdoba* (March 1933): 86; *Boletín Eclesiástico del*

Arzobispado de Córdoba (April 1935), as quoted in *El Cruzado*, no. 998, 138. This issue is from 1935. No dates are specified in the journal.

8. For example, see A. Sanz Carrada, “Esta es vuestra hora y el poder de las tinieblas,” *El Cruzado*, no. 890 [n.d., 1933]: 113–14; “La enseñanza del catolicismo, las otras religiones,” *El Cruzado*, 896, 161; no. 896, 78; no. 938, 1; no. 950, 174; no. 965, 290; these are only a small sample (from 1934). Further: no. 1016, 281; no. 1017, 290–91; no. 1002, 172–73 on socialism and on the Spiritualists, as well as no. 1027, 370; no. 1029, 386; no. 1030, 398; no. 1031, 402 (in 1935).

9. *Ibid.*, no. 897, 5.

10. *Ibid.*, “Tal es la señalada virtud del régimen de Hitler; haber dado la primera clarinada seria contra el pueblo de Israel.” The full source is given in Graciela Ben-Dror, “The Catholic Church in Argentina and the Jewish People in the Holocaust Era, 1930–1945” (Ph.D. diss. Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993), 461, Appendix 7.

11. *El Cruzado*, no. 945 [first half of 1934]: 133.

12. *Ibid.*, no. 950 [first half of 1934]: 174. “It is well that the world—some countries earlier, some later—decided to rid themselves in any way of the filth of the Bolsheviks, Jews and Freemasons”; and *ibid.*, no. 948, 158.

13. *Ibid.*, no. 959 [first half of 1934]: 245.

14. See *ibid.*, no. 965 [first half of 1934]: 290. Also in this period, the nationalist press, *Crisol*, *Bandera Argentina*, *La Fronda*.

15. “Los nuevos heresiarcas alemanes,” *El Cruzado*, no. 966 [first half of 1934]: 300; *ibid.*, no. 967 [first half of 1934]: 321–22.

16. *Ibid.*, no. 970 [latter half of 1934]: 333.

17. *Ibid.*, the source of the quotations is not stated, but it is explicitly stressed that they were taken from Hitler’s speech. *El Cruzado*, no. 970 [latter half of 1934]: 333 and no. 979 [end of 1934]: 407.

18. *Ibid.*, no. 973 [end of 1934]: 358; no. 976 [end of 1934]: 382–83; no. 975 [end of 1934]: 373.

19. *El Cruzado*, no. 992 [end of 1934]: 85; no. 994 [early 1935]: 109.

20. “Quién cree ud. que son mas capitalistas, los jesuitas o los judíos?” *El Cruzado*, no. 1013 [mid-1935]: 59; and “La prensa y el imperio de las masas,” *ibid.*, 260–61.

21. *Ibid.*, 262.

22. *El Cruzado*, no. 1023 [end of 1935]: 339.

23. “Las botas del General,” *El Cruzado*, no. 1032 [end of 1935]: 412–13.

24. A quotation from Ramiro de Maeztu appears in the article “Freemasonry.” Although no source is cited, there is complete identification with his words. Ramiro de Maeztu, “La masonería,” *El Cruzado*, no. 1001, 163–64. The author was Spanish Ambassador to Argentina at the end of the 1920s and became influential in nationalist Catholic circles.

25. The publications *Sol y Luna*, *Restauración Social*, *Criterio*, and *El Pueblo* all show the tremendous influence of Ramiro de Maeztu, as noted by many Catholic scholars, referring especially Maeztu’s book, *Defensa de la Hispanidad* (Madrid: 1934, rpt., 5th ed., Madrid: n.p., 1946), 198–99, 209–15.

26. “La tragedia austriaca,” *El Pueblo*, 12 Mar. 1938, 1. “El zarpazo de Hitler,” *ibid.*, 13 Mar. 1938, 4.

27. “Los acontecimientos de Austria retornaron como un trueno en Europa,” *El Pueblo*, 18 Mar. 1938; and “El fantasma de la guerra europea,” editorial, *ibid.*

28. “Huyen los judíos,” *El Pueblo*, 15 Mar. 1938.

29. “Se practicaron nuevas detenciones en los círculos financieros de Viena,” *El Pueblo*, 18 Mar. 1938; also: “Cuestión judía ecuatoriana,” *Criterio*, no. 517 (1938): 81–82; *ibid.*, no. 535 (1938); no. 534 (1938): 91–93. On the position of the conservative antisemitic right see *La Fronda*, 8 July 1938.

30. See Graciela Ben-Dror, “La Conferencia de Evián: el periodismo católico argentino y la conformación de la opinión pública,” *Judaica Latinoamericana*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993), 87–97. Further material: “Las actividades Nazis en la Argentina,” *Mundo Israelita*, 2 Feb. 1935; Marcos Breitman, “Las actividades político-económicas de los Nazis en América del Sur,” *La Luz*, 22 July 1938 and 29 July 1938.

31. “De nuevo la cuestión judía,” *Criterio*, no. 540 (1938): 232–33.

32. See also Julio Halperin Donghi, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1985).

33. See the Jewish press for this interpretation in the speeches of Jewish leaders and in the Jewish media, for example: *Mundo Israelita*, 14 May 1938; 30 Apr. 1938; 21 Feb. 1935. On the reservations of the hierarchy regarding *Crisol*, see *Crisol*, 12 Apr. 1935; 16 Oct. 1935.

34. “De nuevo la cuestión judía,” *Criterio*, no. 540 (1938): 232–33.

35. *Ibid.*, 233. On Lombardo Toledano, see Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough, eds., *Latin America Between the Second World War and the Cold*

War, 1944–1948 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 190–216; Donghi, *Historia contemporánea*, 233.

36. “De nuevo la cuestión judía,” 233
37. “Declaración de Principios,” *Restauración* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1937). A quotation from Marysa Navarro Gerassi, *Los Nacionalistas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Álvarez, 1969), 121. “Criadero de cuervos,” “Postulado de nuestra lucha,” *Alianza de la Juventud Nacionalista* (n.d.); *La Fronda*, 6 July 1938; *ibid.*, 7 July 1938; “Agua de Evián trae el tifus,” *ibid.*, 9 July 1938; *ibid.*, 11 July 1938; “El mal camino de Evián,” *ibid.*, 13 July 1938; 16 July 1938; 17 July 1938; 18 July 1938; 29 July 1938. On the question of Jewish immigration, the issue was raised long before. The Legión Cívica Argentina, an extreme antisemitic group, which demanded “Argentina for the Argentineans.” See also *Crisol*, 6 May 1938; *El Pueblo*, 31 Aug. 1937; *Clarinada*, Mar. 1938 and Aug. 1938.
38. “Ayer se inauguró la conferencia de refugiados,” *El Pueblo*, 7 July 1938; “El problema migratorio,” *ibid.*, 1 Feb. 1938; 8 July 1938; also Intergovernmental Committee, July 1938, 21–22; “No hubo acuerdo en Evián,” *El Pueblo*, 9 July 1938; “Se pide a la Conferencia de refugiados,” *ibid.*, 10 July 1938; see also “600,000 judíos,” *El Pueblo*, 9 July 1938, 10 July 1938, 12 July 1938, 15 July 1938.
39. “El semitismo es peligroso para todo el mundo,” *Los Principios*, 3 July 1938.
40. “Especial responsabilidad tiene la Unión en el Congreso,” *La Nación*, 8 July 1938; see also David Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938–1941* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968; rpt., New York: Pantheon Books, 1985). On immigration see Haim Avni, *Argentina y la historia de la inmigración judía, 1810–1950* (Jerusalem: AMIA-Magnes Press, 1983); Elvira Risech, “Inmigración judía a la Argentina, 1938–1942: Entre la aceptación y el rechazo,” *Rumbos*, no. 15 (1986): 91–113; Leonardo Senkman, “Argentina’s Immigration Policy during the Holocaust (1938–1945),” *Yad Vashem Studies* 21 (1991): 155–88.
41. “Buena política migratoria,” *Criterio*, no. 544 (1938): 338.
42. “La Conferencia de Evián,” *El Pueblo*, 21 July 1938.
43. “El Poder Ejecutivo limitó la entrada de extranjeros al país,” *El Pueblo*, 29 July 1938; “No se admitirá por ahora inmigración judía,” *ibid.*, 1–2 Feb. 1938; see also: Avni, *Argentina y la historia*, 433.
44. “Renovación inmigratoria,” *Los Principios*, 1 Aug. 1938.
45. “Buena política inmigratoria,” *Criterio*, no. 544 (1938): 338.

46. *Comité contra el racismo y el antisemitismo, Actas del 1er. Congreso contra el Racismo y el Antisemitismo* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 6–7 Aug. 1938).
47. “Congreso ‘Contra’ y ‘Anti,’” *Criterio*, no. 545 (1938): 369.
48. *Ibid.*
49. “La asamblea antirracista y el Dr. Martínez Zuviría,” *El Pueblo*, 7 Aug. 1938.
50. “La judería,” *La Fronda*, 16 July 1938; 17 July 1938; 18 July 1938; “Las conferencias por radio del Padre Filippo,” *ibid.*, 20 Oct. 1938; *ibid.*, 2 Aug. 1938; 3 Aug. 1938; 4 Aug. 1938, 5 Aug. 1938. On the entire issue see Avni, *Argentina y la historia*, 431–43.
51. See the declaration of Archbishop Copello at his audience with the pope in Rome, *REABA* (Jan. 1936).
52. *REABA* (June 1936): 423. The president’s speech of May 7, 1936 was published in the official journal of the Buenos Aires diocese.
53. Alberto Ciria, *Partidos y poder en la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, 1975), 50–57; Alberto Dorfman, *Historia de la industria argentina* (Buenos Aires: Solar, 1983); Floreal Forni, “Catolicismo y Peronismo” (I), *Unidos*, no. 14 (Apr. 1987): 212–21; *Nueva Tierra*, no. 5 (Jan. 1989).
54. One of the important groups against antisemitism in Argentina was the Comité Contra el Racismo y el Antisemitismo (Committee against Racism and Antisemitism); see Primer Congreso contra el Racismo y el Antisemitismo, Agosto 1938; see its newspapers *El Corresponsal Argentino*, no. 8 (29 July 1938); no. 28 (20 May 1939); no. 34 (20 Aug. 1939); *Contra* 2, no. 7 (11 Sept. 1938). In contrast, see the liberal press *La Nación*, 11 Dec. 1938; *La Prensa*, 1 Jan. 1939. *Crítica* was very active against illegal immigration in 1940; see *Crítica*, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 20 Nov. 1940; also *El Mundo*, 20 June 1940, *El Diario*, 25 June 1940; *La Vanguardia*, 29 June 1940.

CHAPTER 7

The World War and Its Implications for the Argentinean Church

ARGENTINA AND THE INTERNATIONAL BACKGROUND

The German invasion of Poland at the beginning of September 1939 confronted the Western powers with the full impact of German deceit and the failure of the policy of appeasement. The treaty obligations of Britain and France to Poland made the declaration of war on Germany inevitable. The Second World War caused bitter and far-reaching confrontations in Argentina too, despite its distance from the theater of war. Argentina's foreign policy reflected the barrier separating the two opposing camps in that country's politics, which continued during and after the war. The epithets "Fascist," "Nazi," and "Communist" were hurled from one side to the other, aimed at besmirching political opponents even long after the defeat of Germany.

Argentina did not succeed in maintaining its neutrality but became a pawn in the political game. At the outbreak of the armed conflict, Argentina, along with most of Latin America, followed the lead of the United States and declared itself neutral. This position lasted until the severance of diplomatic relations with the Axis powers on January 26, 1944 and the eventual declaration of war against Germany and Japan on March 27, 1945. Argentina had experienced years of internal and external pressure as a result of the complex relations between itself, the United States, and Britain.

The entry of the United States into the war on December 7, 1941 following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, sharpened the internal conflicts in Argentina amid calls to the government to abandon its policy of neutrality. This sparked a crisis within the ruling elite, and was one of the chief causes of the military coup in June 1943.

Any analysis of Argentina's policy of neutrality must consider the considerable effect on it of the complicated relations with the United States and Britain. The relevant documents concerning the United States show that

these relations had never been remarkable for their harmony, and during the 1930s the contradictions between the foreign policies of America and Argentina became even sharper. A crisis erupted after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, most clearly evident at the Rio de Janeiro conference in January 1942, when most of the other countries of Latin America, under American pressure, declared war on the Axis powers.¹

Argentina's formulation of the final agreement at the conference was accepted over that proposed by the United States—it only “recommended” a declaration of war on the Axis powers, whereas the Americans wanted the declaration to be mandatory and unambiguous. Argentina did not submit to American dictates, and in time became a major obstacle to the fulfillment of American plans on the South American continent.

Regarding relations between Great Britain and Argentina, historians generally that from the end of the 19th century through the 1920s, they were positive. Argentina could be defined as an unofficial “colony” of the British empire, good relations being based on the identity of interests between the oligarchy of great landowners in Argentina, who wished to develop agricultural exports, and British capital and industrial power. During the First World War British capital accounted for 60 percent of foreign investment in Argentina. British financiers had complete control of internal and maritime communications, and considerable influence in the industrial sector, public services, commerce, and finance.

From the 1920s, American investments began to increase, accompanied by growing commerce between these countries. A tripartite system of relations between Argentina, the United States, and Britain continued to exist during the Second World War. American opposition to the entry of Argentinean agricultural produce into the protected American domestic market led to the renewal and development of economic relations with Britain. Despite the difficulties involved, Britain maintained its position as the central economic force in Argentina and its political influence on the ruling classes was of considerable weight.²

The Second World War, however, proved a severe test for British interests in Argentina and for the relations between the two countries, which suffered an irreversible change, both economic and political.

Even before the consolidation of the Nazi regime, Germany had become one of Argentina's most important commercial and financial partners, second only to its ties with Britain. The influence of Nazism, however, cannot be credited to German economic penetration alone; one must also look at the

links that had been forged in two other spheres—military and ideological. Modernization of the Argentinean at the turn of the century had been directed by German officers and the army was almost completely dependent on German military equipment. The Argentinean officer corps had confidence in Germany's military strength and its methods. Although contact with Germany had been interrupted during the First World War, Argentina resumed sending officers for training in Germany between 1924 and 1930, from the time of the coup d'état of General José P. Uriburu to the establishment of the Conservative governments which followed his regime. It was these graduates who formed the human reservoir from which the pro-German and pro-Nazi Argentine officer class developed. We cannot conclude from this, however, that these circles comprised the majority of the citizens of Argentina or that they had the power to impose a regime similar to that of the Nazis.³

Nazism, fascism, and other authoritarian ideologies had considerable influence among the upper classes. Nazism had a great impact within the local German colony in Argentina, but it also gained support in other civilian and military circles. During the war years, the penetration of Nazi propaganda into Argentina grew by leaps and bounds. Materially, German penetration was focused in several areas: financial support for the press, espionage, infiltration of German-speaking schools, and dissemination of Nazi ideology through news agencies and front organizations—as noted in an earlier chapter, a parliamentary committee of inquiry was appointed to investigate this.⁴

In light of all this, it is important to understand the attitude of the Argentinean Church to the decisions and major actions of German policy during the Second World War, such as the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact of August 1939, the invasion of Poland the following month, and the invasion of Russia in June 1941. Forces were at work in Argentina that prevented the severance of relations with the Axis powers and continued the policy of neutrality even after the attack on Pearl Harbor, in contrast to most other Latin American countries. What were the positions taken by the Argentinean Church during this period of crises and confrontation and how did it justify them?

THE ATTITUDE TO THE RIBBENTROP-MOLOTOV PACT

By early 1939, few people doubted that the world was heading toward war. In his April 1939 editorial, “The Absurd War” in the weekly *Criterio*, Franceschi wrote:

This war will of necessity be long, hard and of an ideological nature, because it will involve those governments of an “anti-totalitarian” nature, that is the democracies, against the supporters of totalitarian regimes.⁵

The world was amazed in late August 1939 when Germany and Russia announced the signing of a non-aggression agreement known as the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. Franceschi, however, was not surprised. He pointed out that both communism and Nazism were Hegelian ideologies based on a materialistic view of the world, in opposition to the importance placed on man’s spiritual side as found in Catholic teaching.⁶ Marxist theory might emphasize the evils of the class system, while Nazism promoted a cult of “racial purity” and loyalty to the person of the Führer and the state, but both shared a profound anti-Christian and anti-Catholic viewpoint arising from “the totalitarianism which is typical of both of them.”⁷ The Nazi-Soviet pact would have been of no significance if it were merely an expression of temporary political interests, but in view of the similarities in Nazi and Soviet ideology, Franceschi (writing before the outbreak of war) viewed the pact as stable and secure, and therein lay its danger. Catholic circles “had hoped, that if Nazism had continued its advance it would have caused the defeat of communism—or vice versa.” But following the signing of the pact, Catholics feared the expansion of both regimes, which bore the seeds of a spiritual and material conflict, “a battle, which if it occurs, will be without parallel since the emergence of Christianity.”⁸

The radically anti-Communist and antisemitic priest, Virgilio Filippo, writing in *El Pueblo*, claimed that “Nazism and Communism had not been weaned from the poison they had drunk and the pact between them had been signed for its mutual benefits and not because of any concessions in principle.”⁹ Unlike Franceschi, Filippo did not see the world as divided between totalitarian and democratic societies; for him, all the countries of Europe existed in sin. He ridiculed the Argentinean Left for its acceptance of a “natural alliance” that had led to the Nazi-Soviet pact.¹⁰

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR AND THE CATHOLIC REACTION

Like the Vatican, the heads of the Catholic Church in Argentina did not condemn the Nazi invasion of “Catholic Poland” immediately; the government of Argentina, like other governments, did not react at the beginning of September 1939.¹¹ Moreover, *El Pueblo*, expressing the opinion of the Church establishment, commended the neutrality of the Argentinean government on the outbreak of war in Europe. Considering “the horrors of war” this was “the only stance suitable for our country.” Furthermore,

We must vigorously defend our neutral position against all intrigues, and make every effort that this become not only the official stance, but that it should become a feeling which beats in the hearts of all who dwell in our country. There is no reason for a schism in the Argentine nation, particularly as these matters affect us only indirectly.¹²

The Vatican position, the newspaper declared, was an example of its centuries-long impartiality in the face of political strife and war, steadfastly maintained by Pope Pius XII, who called for “humanization of the conflict” and spoke of the “hope for peace” between the sides. His words were widely applauded by the domestic Church.

The situation of Poland, torn apart and crushed under the heel of the Nazi invader, aroused a wave of sympathy in Argentina. This was accompanied by warmth for the local Polish-Catholic community, which embarked on fundraising for the conquered homeland.¹³ No similar sentiment was evinced towards the Jews of Poland.

Apart from support for the official policy of neutrality, many circles greeted with approval the government decree that banned public institutions from acting in the interests of any particular side in the conflict. Even if there is no proof that the Argentinean Church had any direct influence on national foreign policy, it is quite clear that in the first stages this policy met its expectations.

The identity of interest between the Church and the State was reinforced at the end of September 1939, prior to the convening of the Pan-American Conference in Panama. The conference supported the principle of neutrality for the entire American continent (including the United States and the South and Central American countries) in the European conflict, and this further legitimized the joint position of the Church and the state in Argentina.

Catholics contended that it made no difference—purely in terms of economics and expediency—which side won the war. The victor, according

to Franceschi, would gain economic superiority and control of the economies of the weaker nations, including Argentina. Franceschi, however, was well aware of the spiritual and philosophical differences between the warring nations: “The strengthening of the Nazi and Communist doctrines is dangerous, from both the Christian and the humanitarian point of view,” he wrote, and “The victory of these tendencies may bring a peace due to breaking the enemy underfoot, but not real peace based on order and stability.”¹⁴

Franceschi’s anti-totalitarian opinions, propagated in the Buenos Aires diocese, overcame his anti-liberal tendencies. He, like many others, felt that the growing strength of the totalitarian states after the pact between Stalin and Hitler, and the division of Poland signaled real danger for Christian civilization.

On October 20, 1939, Pope Pius XII sent out an encyclical entitled *Summi Pontificatus*, in which he analyzed the profound evil that had led to the outbreak of war. This evil was born from desertion of the path of Christ the Messiah, which led to forgetfulness of the laws of human unity and mercy, laws ordained by nature and redemption. The totalitarian outlook was a serious error, but the pope did not condemn the German invasion of Poland outright. He made do with abstractions, such as human solidarity and mercy, or the errors arising from the conversion of absolute rule from a means to an end, an end which endangered the foundations of the international order and ignored internal treaties.¹⁵

Among the Catholics of Argentina there were different approaches regarding the position and degree of the errant totalitarian doctrines. While some stressed the communist danger, others saw no difference between communism and Nazism, and only the extreme nationalist groups showed a markedly pro-Nazi orientation, but they were a minority. Those in the Church establishment were mostly opposed to Nazism and the Nazi regime in Germany.¹⁶

THE CATHOLIC REACTION TO THE GERMAN INVASION OF THE WEST

The German invasion of Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg finally forced the Pope to break his silence. He sent telegrams to the heads of these states, expressing his sympathy with their nations. There followed the speedy reactions in the Western world. The nations of America issued a manifesto

protesting against the disregard for these countries' neutrality and the trampling of their sovereignty.¹⁷

Prominent among the many voices raised in protest was that of Cardinal Arthur Hinsley, the archbishop of Westminster. The Argentinean Church kept to its tradition of following the Vatican's lead. On June 15, 1940, Archbishop Copello of Buenos Aires, published a prayer for peace on earth, which had been written by Bishop Miguel de Andrea, a well-known conservative and pro-Western cleric.¹⁸

At the Pan-American Conference in July 1940, the Latin American nations reaffirmed their neutrality. The invasion of France, however, had aroused wide reactions among the people of Argentina, who had close cultural and emotional ties with France. The reverberations of the invasion were felt in all liberal and Catholic circles. Nevertheless, the newspaper coverage in the Catholic press was terse and dry, making no distinction between attacker and attacked—the first condition for authoritative comment. The leading commentator of *El Pueblo*, Luis Barrantes Molina, a member of Catholic Action, saw the survival of Catholicism as the focus of all events. He hoped that the heavy losses suffered by Britain would weaken Protestantism and the Freemasons. His commentaries revealed an expectation not of the defeat of Germany but of the preferable possibility of the defeat of Britain.¹⁹

THE RESPONSE OF ARGENTINA'S CATHOLICS TO THE GERMAN INVASION OF THE SOVIET UNION

In the wake of Operation Barbarossa—the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941—the fate of the Jews of Eastern Europe took an irreversible turn. Systematic mass murder of the Jews by the *Einsatzgruppen* and their collaborators began. Information about the situation of the Jews trickled into the West during 1942. The pope received additional significant information from Vatican representatives in the occupied countries, but his treatment of the issues was never made public.²⁰

The reactions of the Church in Argentina after the Nazi invasion of Russia can only be understood through consideration of the information available to it, and its ideological and political positions. In the latter half of 1941, the political positions in Argentinean Catholics polarized to the most extreme degree. Thereafter, three main currents could be discerned: official, nationalist, and Christian Democrat. At the risk of some generalization, the

following account attempts to illuminate what was common to the three currents and what distinguished them.

The Official Position

No mention of war-related issues appears in the publications of the See of Buenos Aires, and thus there was no comment about the German invasion of Russia. On international affairs, the Argentinean Church repeated the Vatican position as found in *L’Osservatore Romano* or on Vatican Radio. Local political and religious issues, including parliamentary debate, were covered, and various views found among the Argentinean clergy were published.

The lay organization, Argentinean Catholic Action (ACA), was intended to promote Catholic values in society.²¹ In 1941, Catholic Action participated in a traditional May Day demonstration sponsored by the National Youth Front—a militantly antisemitic nationalist organization that had been active since 1937. Catholic Action participants shouted “Long live Jesus Christ!” but alongside it, one also heard “Long live Hitler!”²² Church officials were alarmed at this development, and the Central Committee president, Dr. Emilio Cárdenas reminded members that “there is no ban on membership of parties and movements whose principles are not opposed to the correct doctrine, but it is forbidden to go out into the streets and demonstrate under the banner of Catholic Action.” The banner should not be displayed at any political meeting, he went on, “so as not to provide our enemies with any pretext.” Also forbidden was the use of the Catholic Action slogan “Long live Jesus Christ!” in a political context. Dr. Cárdenas reiterated the Church position against liberalism, communism, and Nazi racism, but only in general terms.²³

The majority of Catholic Action members who were active in political movements were nationalist, with only a few opting for the democratic parties. Those who were part of the nationalist stream were often pro-German, and agreed with Charles Maurras’s *politique d’abord* principle rather than the Church’s “Catholicism above all!”²⁴ Catholic Action’s official organ expressed no opinion on the invasion of Russia. Its leadership discerned “the ruins of dying Capitalism, in the noise of battle,” and proposed building “a new Christian social order” founded on Catholicism and the Christian Church.²⁵

In contrast to this attitude, on June 24, 1941, two days after the German invasion of the Soviet Union began, *El Pueblo* published an editorial attacking Soviet Russia, stating that while it did not support either of the

protagonists in the war, it favored a war against communism. The following day, the newspaper's commentator, Barrantes Molina, justified the invasion of the USSR, arguing that "in this way the Russians have paid for their sins." Virgilio Filippo launched a violent tirade in the newspaper against the archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Hinsley, who had asked his flock to pray for the Russian people in their war. Filippo, though representative of the extreme nationalist antisemites, was not alone, for the Catholic establishment praised Hitler and attacked Churchill, who had sharply denounced the Nazi invasion of Russia. Even when the Nazi advance penetrated deep into the USSR, the Argentinean Church hierarchy voiced no opposition and accepted the Nazi victory over communism as a *fait accompli*. Clearly, fear of the spread of communism, particularly in Argentina, was the chief concern.²⁶

The semi-official weekly *Criteria* was more moderate than *El Pueblo*. Franceschi, in his commentary on the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact in 1939, had highlighted the ideological affinity between Nazism and communism as totalitarian states, which made the pact possible. How was he now to explain Hitler's attack on Stalin? On July 10, 1941, three weeks after the start of the invasion, he saw no reason to withdraw from his previous position. The pact had come about for pragmatic reasons, he wrote, and as soon as it became an obstacle to German ambitions, it was discarded. Despite similarities in their totalitarian ideologies, it was inevitable that the agreement would not be permanent. In Catholic eyes, the Soviet system was even worse than Nazi totalitarianism. Franceschi reminded supporters of the USSR that there had always been a cultural gap between Russia and Argentina, in contrast to the cultural ties between Germany and Argentina. Furthermore, Argentina's diplomatic relations with Russia had been severed after the October Revolution, and when Russia invaded Finland in December 1940, it had been expelled from the League of Nations at the initiative of Argentina.

Franceschi nevertheless tried to distinguish the perpetrators of the revolution from the Russian people: "Marx was a German Jew and Engels an English capitalist," hence the principles of the 1917 revolution "were not Russian principles."²⁷ Those who supported a Soviet victory and those in the camp giving them international political backing were, accordingly, "suspect Argentineans." It is difficult to ignore the antisemitic tone permeating these words.

In commentary on local and foreign events, the Catholic Church in Argentina continued to emphasize the threat of communism and Church teaching against it. However, from June 1941 until the entry of the United

States into the war *Criterio* did not alter its position: “the fact that its members have not taken up a position on the conflict between Germany and Soviet Russia does not mean that Church is at a crossroads.”²⁸

Not all Argentinean Catholics accepted the *Criterio* stance. *El Pueblo*, for example, unequivocally supported the Axis powers and feared an Allied victory over Germany, a victory which would mean the ascendancy of anti-Catholic forces, namely “liberalism, Protestantism, the Jewish synagogue, secularism and communism.”²⁹ Therefore Argentina had to remain neutral and the government should act only in the domestic national interest. International and foreign problems should not concern Argentineans: “In my homeland I cannot, do not want to, and must not behave like a foreigner.”³⁰

El Pueblo’s support for neutrality was on political grounds only, but the devout Catholic could not remain neutral on questions of moral standards and religious truths. In consequence, *El Pueblo*’s political neutrality became in effect a pro-Nazi stand. The invasion of Russia was “divine retribution,” and the 1939 invasion of Poland was described in 1941, in an apologist vein, as a justifiable German reaction to the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles, which had robbed Germany of much of its lands.³¹ Although *El Pueblo* justified the Nazi policy of conquest even though it was known that the Nazi regime had harmed the German Catholic Church, the Catholic leadership and its flock in the Buenos Aires diocese did not see fit to comment on this or publicly to express any reservations. *El Pueblo* was still recommended reading and received regular financial support from the Church coffers.³²

Only in 1942 did the Church hierarchy in Argentina publish a pastoral letter stating that extreme nationalism, communism, totalitarianism, and racism were condemned by the Church, and that a Catholic in good conscience could not identify with these philosophies. The expansion of nationalist activity among Catholics and the public approval of Nazi Germany’s victories and principles apparently made such a declaration necessary. In the wake of this statement by the bishops, *El Pueblo* did condemn Hitler, but added that this did not mean that all his enemies were clean as the driven snow and defenders of the Christian faith, “even if they are Liberals, Freemasons, Jews, Communists, Atheists, Protestants, or other persecutors of Christ.” Again, the inclusion of the Jews among the enemies of the Christian faith was a daily routine in the Catholic press.³³

The Christian Democrat Position

Bishop Miguel de Andrea was the most prominent Catholic personality in the See of Buenos Aires during the 1920s, preceding the emergence of Fr. Franceschi. His views were once again received with attention, particularly after the outbreak of war, when he clarified his position on such topics as democracy, social justice, and freedom, stressing and integrating into his philosophy Catholic ideals gleaned from the papal encyclicals. Precisely when the prestige of liberal and democratic societies was being wiped out in consequence of the Nazi victories in Western Europe in 1940, de Andrea adopted an uncompromising stand in defense of democracy. In May 1941 he emphasized that, according to papal doctrine, Catholicism did not have to split into two opposing poles, such as Right and Left, higher and lower. The only authentic stand was symbolized by the Cross and by Jesus Christ, who accepted his crucifixion in order to bring salvation to all mankind. Against the racist antisemitic position, de Andrea emphasized that divine salvation was meant for all humanity, and formed the centerpiece of Catholic Christian philosophy. On September 4, 1941 de Andrea lectured at the faculty of Law and Social Science of the University of Buenos Aires on the 50th anniversary of the publication Leo XIII's encyclical on social issues, *Rerum Novarum*.³⁴

He predicted that future generations would understand that democracy was in mortal peril in the first half of the 20th century, and that not only should it be defended but "in order to deepen democracy it must be made more perfect."³⁵ More perfect meant "more Christian."

Catholic pro-democratic circles in Argentina unequivocally hoped for an Allied victory. After the German invasion of Russia, these circles began publishing the fortnightly *Orden Cristiano*, edited by the layman Alberto Duhau. Frequent contributors included a number of priests and lay activists, representing an anti-Nazi stream inspired by the anti-fascist and anti-Nazi philosophy of prominent Catholics like Jacques Maritain, Georges Bernanos (after he disavowed his anti-Jewish position), Theodore Maynard, Pierre Charles, Jules Gérard Saliège, and others.³⁶

Christian Democrats grappled with the problem of whether they should hope for a successful Russian defense or whether Stalin's repulse of the Nazi armies would pose a greater danger for Christianity. The invasion of the USSR was against Christian principles; it was not a "preventive strike," since Russia had never threatened Germany. Christians above all had to pursue justice. To support a particular side on grounds that one expected victory to benefit the Church was mere rationalization. Catholics, rather, had to act

based on the historic concern of the Church for justice, leaving the end result in God's hands. It was the Christian's duty to defend the victim of injustice, to safeguard his rights, without consideration of his beliefs and customs.³⁷

Christian Democrats also argued that a Nazi victory might bring a far greater catastrophe upon Christianity than the success of the Russian defense. Alfred Rosenberg's racist ideology, for example, had the aim of supplanting the Christian religion with a new paganism. In addition, the Nazi philosophy posited continuous expansion aimed at world conquest, whereas in Russia after the elimination of Trotsky, far-reaching changes were taking place based on the desire to "unite the Russian people," instead of the previously-sanctioned quest for world revolution in the style of the Comintern. The Russians had surrounded themselves by a defensive wall against the most dangerous and cruel enemy they had ever known—Nazism.³⁸ With these views, Christian Democrats represented a minority within the Catholic community of Argentina.

The Christian Democrat's view was attacked by Virgilio Filippo in his propaganda leaflet, *Whose Side Are You On? England, Russia, or Germany?*, in which he portrayed the leaders of Britain and the United States as a gang of criminals attempting to gain control of the entire world and to destroy the morals of all other countries, including Argentina.³⁹ In response, the Christian Democrats asserted that every possible error of Christian doctrine could be found in this leaflet. They roundly criticized Filippo on the grounds that he attacked "Communism and Semitism," while placing an official seal of approval on Nazi crimes because he thought that "National Socialism and Fascism were nothing other than a reaction against Communism." The Christian Democrats held that one had to decide "with whom you may be and with whom not in these times." They favored cooperation between the believers in all the religions, "cooperation based on a new friendship" and "because of the responsibility of all believers for the material world."⁴⁰

A bitter dispute developed between the two sides. The priest remained adamant in his stand, which united anti-communism with antisemitism. Filippo's leaflet was reprinted in full in the antisemitic periodical *Clarinada* (in which the chief cartoonist used the pen-name "Mata Jacoibos"—Jew-killer). After its publication, the editor of *Orden Cristiano* demanded to know whose side Filippo was on. It was disgraceful that a Catholic priest was being published in a notorious antisemitic magazine.⁴¹

While Virgilio Filippo was, at certain stages of the war, willing to voice support for Nazi Germany as the primary opponent of liberalism,

communism, and Judaism, condemnation of Nazi totalitarianism became the central pillar of the Christian Democrats. They saw in Nazism a terrible danger to Argentina, because it enticed youth away from Catholic teaching. They called upon higher authorities to support their position, pointing to figures such as Prof. Theodore Maynard, a North American Catholic writer who stated unequivocally that the Catholic Church could have no sympathy for Nazism since Catholicism and Nazism were separated by an unbridgeable gulf; Hitlerism was more dangerous to Christianity than Stalinism, whose cruelty was none other than

an accident of history, which will pass with time, whereas National Socialism was steeped up to its neck in the myth of holy German blood, on which a whole new and powerful religion was based, especially because of its absurdity.⁴²

Accordingly, one could fight atheist communism, but Nazi doctrine with its mystical and irrational nature had to be totally rejected, and this was the position taken by the Christian Democrats of Argentina.

The Nationalist Position

Despite differences on ideological, strategic, and tactical issues, the various elements of the nationalist movement held some common principles, chiefly, the stress on the importance of the Catholic foundation of Argentinean history and culture. In addition, the Hispanic tradition was perceived as an important constituent of the common national character, which they wished to foster and preserve.⁴³

The nationalist movement set out its own philosophical, historical, political, and economic alternative to the liberals and the Marxists. In philosophy they rediscovered medieval Christian scholasticism as a basis for the argument against positivism. The nationalist movement strove to destroy the existing regime, which served the interests of the oligarchy and maintained its hegemony by demagogic deceit. The aim was to achieve political sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency by revolutionary political means, in accordance with the principle of “politics above all.”⁴⁴

For the most part, the nationalists rejected monarchist ideas and stood for Argentina’s republican tradition, but with an eye on the fascist model. The country’s chief enemies, in their view, were foreign imperialism and international Marxism, with the liberal ideology forming a common infrastructure. They, too, were in favor of an independent foreign policy, in the tradition of Argentina since the First World War, where such a policy

uncompromisingly served only national interests, free of ideological ties and pressures.⁴⁵

The Catholic contribution to the nationalist movement found expression in acceptance of Catholic teaching, and in the absorption of cadres that had at some stage broken away from Catholic Action and now devoted themselves to nationalist political activity.⁴⁶ The nationalists supported Argentinean neutrality during the Second World War because of their anti-imperialist stand, directed mainly at Britain. The Nazi invasion of the West in 1940 and of Russia in June 1941 did not lead to any change in principle on this stand. The blow struck at Soviet Bolshevism by the German armies excited the various streams among the Argentinean nationalists since there were no notable differences among the “republicans,” the “doctrinaires,” the “pro-fascists,” and the “pro-Nazis” on the issue of foreign policy. In 1941 all these nationalists hoped for an Axis victory.⁴⁷

Traditional and modern antisemitism was an integral part nationalist ideology in Argentina. It encompassed all the political and economic stereotypes as well as anti-Zionism (or antisemitism concealed behind anti-Zionist attitudes).⁴⁸ *Nuevo Orden*, edited by Mario Amadeo and published by circles professing a republican philosophy, emphasized the connection between British imperialism and the “Jewish plutocracy.” *Nueva Política*, which represented the doctrinaire views of influential and prominent Catholic personalities, made aliens and Jews the scapegoat to blame for Argentina’s political and economic woes.⁴⁹ This journal was also edited by a layman, Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, and among the contributors was Julio Meinvielle. While the various streams of Catholic nationalists at times differed in their analysis of the reasons for the severe crisis that beset the country, with regard to the Jews, the difference was negligible. It was between those who blamed the Jews exclusively for the crisis and those deemed the Jews only one part of “foreign capitalism,” which itself was part of the “universal Jewish plot.” Hostility to the Jews was an integral part of the wider nationalist outlook, and anti-Jewish libels were prominent in the antisemitic and anti-communist stance of such pro-Nazi newspapers as *El Pampero* and *Cabildo*.⁵⁰

The “republican” nationalists debated these pro-Nazi opinions but avoided expressing in public their concurrence with these newspapers or with the Nazis. An example may be found in *La Voz del Plata*, which at the beginning of 1942 attacked Dr. Manuel Fresco, governor of Buenos Aires province in the late 1930s, for congratulating the Third Reich and its leader Adolf Hitler, wishing Germany success in the war. Although, as the previous examples

have shown, strident pro-Nazi views were expressed in Argentina during the war, Argentinean nationalism was mostly “Hispanic” in nature rather than ideologically pro-Nazi.⁵¹

The Catholic journal *Sol y Luna* conducted an anti-liberal debate of a philosophical Catholic hue in which political events were seen as an opportunity to advance the Catholic cause. This was best enunciated by José M. Estrada: “We have no intention of creating cooperation between Catholicism and Fascism, but of causing a situation where Fascism will work towards the aims of Catholicism, namely, a ‘new universal order.’” The victory of Hitler at this crucial historical moment was interpreted as providing an opening for a Christian revival.⁵²

Another important constituent of Argentinean nationalism was its identity with Catholicism as the foundation of national culture. Non-Catholic minorities thus came under suspicion of being unpatriotic.

The various factions within the nationalist movement also believed that Argentina’s destiny was to lead the geopolitical region of South America. Hence, “reliance on Europe, which has become the norm of Argentinean liberalism, must give way to authentic ‘Hispano-Americanism,’ whose meaning is a great future for Argentina in the international sphere as well.”⁵³

From these anti-imperialist political trends, which envisaged Argentina as the leader of South America, it is relatively easy to understand the adherence of these groups to “neutrality” and their opposition to an Allied victory. This Argentinean nationalism, in all its shadings, carried all the ingredients for rejecting the Jews as citizens. In the nationalist and Catholic currents the subtle limits between traditional Christian antisemitism and modern antisemitism with its images taken from the political and economic lexicon that circulated in Argentina during the Nazi period became blurred. Prominent Catholics, connected with the Church hierarchy and its institutions, simultaneously exercised influence in extreme nationalist circles. This led to a blurring of the difference between support for Franco, for Mussolini, or for Hitler, who were then perceived as identical.⁵⁴

THE ENTRY OF THE UNITED STATES INTO THE WAR AND THE RIO DE JANEIRO CONFERENCE

The Demand for the Continued Neutrality

Towards the end of the 1930s relations between Argentina and the United States deteriorated and tension further increased when America entered the

war in December 1941. Matters grew still worse after the Rio de Janeiro conference in January 1942, which was an important test of pan-American solidarity. The Third Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the American Republics was called to cement solidarity between the countries of the American continent following the U.S. declaration of war on Japan and Germany. Sumner Welles, the U.S. representative, demanded that all the American states sever diplomatic relations with the Axis powers.

The Argentinean Foreign Minister, Enrique Ruiz Guiñazú, came to the conference with clear instructions from his President, Dr. Ramón Castillo, that on no account was Argentina to abandon its policy of neutrality. In the end, the American Secretary of State Cordell Hull, labeled Argentina as the “bad neighbor.”

As mentioned earlier, after much debate, the Argentinean proposal to “recommend” that the countries of the continent sever relations with the Axis powers was passed, without this measure being obligatory. This enabled Argentina to maintain its policy of neutrality. The American State Department called this agreement “incautious,” and Sumner Welles later paid for his failure with his diplomatic career. The American reaction to the Rio de Janeiro agreement was not slow in coming: Argentina was not included in the Loans Law, which effectively prevented it from buying American arms and munitions. The American Secretary of State claimed that Argentinean diplomacy was influenced by pro-Axis circles and called President Castillo and Foreign Minister Ruiz Guiñazú “pro-Nazi.”⁵⁵

The British government’s approach to Argentina was much more reserved, attempting to justify Argentina’s position and to ease American pressure. In 1942, the British criticized Argentinean neutrality but did not apply any economic sanctions, trying to maintain normal relations with Argentina’s conservative government. This was chiefly in order to defend British investment in that country and as an incentive to continue badly needed exports to Britain. British interests in Argentina favored the conservative government which was led by elements traditionally favorable to Britain. The British understood the short- and long-term advantages for them in the policy of neutrality. In the short term, Argentinean neutrality would allow the shipping of products to Britain unimpeded by the Germans. In the long term, the continuation of economic relations between the two countries and the policy of neutrality would prevent the entry of Argentina into the pan-American framework, led by the United States. This meant the preservation of the Argentinean market outside the influence of American competition,

even after the conclusion of hostilities. The conjunction of interests between British policy and the conservative oligarchy in Argentina, based on agriculture and the meat trade, gave birth to the desire to maintain Argentinean neutrality as for mutual political and economic interest.

The “restorative” or “doctrinaire” nationalists, as they were called by various historians, invoked other reasons in favor of neutrality, including theological considerations propounded by Catholic intellectuals who held central positions in these circles. The reasons raised in support of neutrality were international political, theological political, and domestic pragmatic, as well as emotional.

On the international political plane, the chief argument for neutrality was that such a policy was to the detriment of the “Anglo-Saxons,” who were the main enemy of Argentina, whereas the Axis powers demanded nothing. This position was strengthened by the reaffirmation of the traditional support in Argentina for neutrality as in the First World War. The theological political argument was that Jesus Christ would not have supported “inhuman super-Capitalism or atheistic Democracy.” The “new world order,” that would be instituted by the Axis powers would be based on exalted values of social justice. Victory for the Allies would mean world catastrophe, since the democratic regimes would not be able to prevent the victory of communism, which would become master of the world. In view of this, as well as for pragmatic local reasons, the time had come to throw off the British yoke and follow “a foreign policy best suited to the national interest.” The emotional reasons for adherence to neutrality were based on family ties between many citizens of Argentina and those of Spain and Italy, which meant that these citizens must not do anything to endanger these personal and family ties.⁵⁶

In sum, Argentinean politicians were interested in maintaining neutrality for pragmatic economic and political reasons, while the Catholics who supported this policy did so for ideological and political reasons. The support of nationalist Catholic circles arose from anti-imperialist, anti-liberal, anti-democratic, and anti-communist considerations. During the war all these various considerations were translated into a common political position, namely opposition to the Allies.

Coinciding with the Rio de Janeiro conference a meeting, was held in Buenos Aires culminating in a joint declaration signed by prominent Catholics connected with Catholic Action, the right-wing nationalists, traditional “restorationists,” “populists,” and pro-fascists, all of whom united in the so-called Patriotic Front.

Their declaration included the following points. (a) Argentinean foreign policy should be conducted not only on the basis of abstract principles but to serve the national interest; (b) Argentinean sovereignty was not to be handed over to foreigners; (c) Argentinean neutrality was based on national pride; (d) “We are prepared, if necessary, to fight, but only in defense against a foreign threat”; (e) from the foregoing points, there was the utmost need to strengthen the might of the country, to encourage the development of the military institutions, and to “strengthen national pride against foreign propaganda, which stresses our weakness so that we may turn over our defense to outside powers, thus abandoning traditional Argentinean courage.” The Patriotic Front called upon religious citizens to join its ranks and to work to strengthen of this doctrinal policy, “to safeguard it with intensity, with self-discipline and devotion.”⁵⁷

One individual who supported neutrality was Juan Carlos Goyeneche (an important nationalist Catholic layman), who belonged to the circles of *Sol y Luna* (a Catholic monthly) and *Nueva Política*; in his travels in Europe he represented himself as an emissary of “nationalist youth.” Goyeneche met Franco, Pétain, Laval, Mussolini, von Ribbentrop, Goebbels, and Hitler, as well as having an audience with Pope Pius XII. In his writings, Goyeneche names Ramiro de Maeztu, Primo de Rivera, Charles Maurras, and Julio Meinvielle as the sources of his inspiration. His works include paeans of praise for the antisemitic writer Hugo Wast and the antisemitic priest Leonardo Castellani. Goyeneche’s antisemitic inclinations were evident as late as 1945.⁵⁸

The Catholic establishment daily, *El Pueblo*, also fully backed neutrality, for ideological and political reasons similar to those set out by the nationalist elements. It is difficult to determine whether this was due to the influence on the Church leadership by Catholics active in the nationalist movement, or to substantial agreement between the Church and those circles. Or was the loyalty to neutrality maintained on instructions from the Vatican? “Catholics should not exploit their influence to make Christian countries assist either Russia or Germany in this war,” wrote *El Pueblo*’s official commentator, Luis Barrantes Molina, a position consistent both with the policy of Pius XII after the German invasion of the USSR, as well as the official position of the Argentinean government at the Rio de Janeiro conference.⁵⁹

In accordance with this objectively neutral approach, the heads of the Argentinean Church in Buenos Aires circumspectly kept their distance from the Allies until the break with the Axis in January 1944. It seems that some

Catholic clergymen did receive official Church approval to deliver speeches in the framework of Acción Argentina, a pro-Allied movement formed after the U.S. entry into the war. In January 1942, at the time of Rio de Janeiro conference, these priests made this approval publicly known. Their aim was to show that Archbishop Copello of Buenos Aires himself sanctioned their stand. At this, Copello at once withdrew his approval and forbade the participation of clergymen in activities of Acción Argentina.⁶⁰

This incident proved to be a turning point, constituting a clear-cut and unequivocal political statement. Church approval was originally granted after the German invasion of Russia and symbolized the Church's willingness to enter the widest possible social and political frameworks. But against the background of the new international situation created by the entry of the United States into the war, and the pan-American alignment for severance of diplomatic relations with Germany, the Church retracted its approval, relying, as usual, on the position of the Holy See. A statement declared that "in view of the activities of various ideological movements, which have caused a certain amount of confusion in the minds of Catholics at this time, we deem it necessary to direct them to the correct path, as taught by the highest directives of the Holy See."⁶¹

The Catholic establishment was anxious to maintain the unity of the fold, in view of the cracks that appeared in the monolithic Catholic structure as a result of the internal political debate. Church leaders therefore decreed that all Catholics should avoid independent political action and act only on the instructions of the priests, handed down from a central higher authority. The Catholic Church as a whole, before and after Rio de Janeiro, wholeheartedly backed the policies of Dr. Castillo, the acting president, and supported the policy of the foreign minister Enrique Ruiz Guiñazú. This support created an affinity between the Church hierarchy and the nationalists. The Church hierarchy read the internal map of Argentinean politics skillfully, and absorbed the atmosphere among the Catholic devout, which clearly opposed entry into the war on the side of the Allies.⁶²

NOTES

1. See Mario Rapoport, *Aliados o neutrales? La Argentina frente a la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1988), 7. Further professional material on this subject may be found in *Argentina Between the Great Powers, 1939–1946*, ed. Guido de Tella and D. Cameron

Watt (Oxford: St. Anthony's College, Oxford University Press, 1989), especially the articles by Carlos Escudé, Mario Rapoport, Guido di Tella, and Joseph S. Tulchin.

2. With regard to the Latin American countries that did declare war, see Peter Calvert, *Latin America: Internal Conflict and International Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1969).

3. *Ibid.*, 14. Also see Alan Rouquié, *Poder militar y sociedad política en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1986); Robert Potash, *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1945–1962* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980); Elizabeth Barrett White, “German Influence in the Argentine Army 1900–1945” (Ph.D. diss. University of Virginia, 1986).

4. On the Committee of Enquiry dealing with the Nazi propaganda penetration to Argentina, see chapter 3. See also Joseph Ray, *Argentine Diary* (London: Gollancz Ltd., 1945), 25, 30, 204, 331. On the relativity of the ‘Nazi Menace’ to Argentina see: Ronald Newton, *The Nazi Menace in Argentina 1931–1947* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

5. “La absurda guerra,” *Criterio*, no. 580 (13 Apr. 1939): 341–43.

6. “Hacia la catástrofe,” *Criterio*, no. 599 (1939): 397–98.

7. *Ibid.*, 342–43.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 398.

9. See Virgilio Filippo, “Concierto nazista-comunista,” *El Pueblo*, 26 Aug. 1939; idem, “Quienes tienen las manos limpias?” *El Pueblo*, 1 Sept. 1939; n.a., “El comunismo y la prensa mundial,” *REABA* (Feb. 1939): 111. “La situación religiosa en el Reich,” *Boletín ACA*, no. 203 (1939): 610–11. On the debate between historians on the policies and motives of Pius XII during the Second World War in general, and specifically concerning the Jews, see Saul Friedländer, *Pius XII and the Third Reich* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), and John F. Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews During the Holocaust 1939–1941* (New York: Ktav, 1980), who draws upon Pierre Blét, Robert A. Graham, Angelo Martini, and Burkhardt Schneider, eds. *Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 12 vols. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965–1981).

10. “Concierto nazista-comunista,” *El Pueblo*, 26 Aug. 1939; “Antinazismo filocomunista,” *Criterio*, no. 599 (1939): 400–401; “Ante el pacto germano-soviético,” *Criterio*, no. 601 (1939); “Habla Moscú, camaradas,” *Criterio*, no. 601 (1939): 11; “Aliados naturales,” *Criterio*, no. 602 (1939): 32–33.

11. “La Silla Apostólica y las fórmulas políticas,” *REABA* (Sept. 1939): 550–56; “El Vaticano y Polonia,” *REABA* (May 1939): 310–11; “La Iglesia y la paz,” *REABA* (Aug. 1939): 449–55; Ambrosio Romero Carranza, “Polonia,” *Criterio*, no. 610 (1939): 227–29; *Boletín ACA*, no. 203 (1939): 607–609; on this issue see Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy*; Francisco Valsecchi, “Es necesario que practiquemos la diplomacia de la presencia,” *Boletín ACA*, no. 205 (1939): 681. On involvement in political issues, see Marcelo Montserrat, “La Política desde *Criterio* 1927–1977,” *Criterio*, no. 1777–1778 (Christmas 1977).
12. “Fue dado a publicidad el decreto del gobierno argentino estableciendo la neutralidad en la contienda europea,” *El Pueblo*, 4–5 Sept. 1939; “La neutralidad argentina,” editorial, *El Pueblo*, 22 Aug. 1939.
13. “Frente a los horrores de la guerra,” editorial, *El Pueblo*, 7 Sept. 1939; “Esperanzas de Paz,” *El Pueblo*, 15 Sept. 1939; “El Reich y la Iglesia,” *El Pueblo*, 16 Sept. 1939; “El dolor de Polonia,” *El Pueblo*, 18–19 Sept. 1939; “La jornada,” *El Pueblo*, 11–12 Sept. 1939; “Guerra, desolación,” *Los Principios*, 2 Sept. 1939; *Criterio*, no. 604 (1939): 51–56.
14. “Será inaugurada hoy en Panamá la conferencia de los Neutrales,” *El Pueblo*, 23 Sept. 1939; “Neutralidad argentina y continental,” *El Pueblo*, 28 Sept. 1939. On the issues discussed at the pan-American conference, see “Primera reunión de consulta entre los ministros de Relaciones Exteriores de las repúblicas americanas de conformidad con los acuerdos de Buenos Aires y de Lima. Panamá,” 23 Sept. 1939 and 3 Oct. 1939, in *Conferencias Internacionales Americanas, Primer Suplemento, 1938–1942* (Washington: n.p., 1943), 103–28; “La guerra,” *Criterio*, no. 605 (1939): 101–3; “Visión espiritual de la guerra,” *REABA* (Nov. 1940): 727.
15. “Summi Pontificatus,” *REABA* (Mar. 1940): 134. “Summi Pontificatus,” in *Doctrina pontificia, documentos políticos*, ed. José Luis Gutiérrez García (Madrid: BAC, 1974), 749–802; *Criterio*, no. 611 (1939): 248–57; “Summi Pontificatus,” *ibid.*, 251–57. See also “El sentido de la encíclica, Summi Pontificatus,” *Criterio*, no. 613 (1939): 301–6; *Criterio*, no. 611 (1939): 251–56. On Franceschi’s position in 1939, see “La crisis internacional y el criterio católico,” *Criterio*, no. 615 (1939): 349.
16. “La traición,” “Comentarios,” *Criterio*, no. 615 (1939); also “La actitud internacional,” *ibid.*, (1939): 352. Also *REABA*, (July 1940): 448; Carlos Conci, *Puede triunfar el comunismo en la Argentina?*, (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1939); “Política extranjera en la Argentina,” *Criterio*, no. 580 (1939): 344; Enrique Rau, *El nacional socialismo y el cristianismo* (Buenos Aires:

Cursos de Cultura Católica, 1939). The censor was Julio Meinvielle, 25 April 1939; Alberto Ezcurra Medrano, *Catolicismo y nacionalismo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Torre Hnos., 1936).

17. On the telegrams, see Saul Friedländer, *Pius XII*, 48–53; on Catholic reactions in Argentina, see “Con el Pontífice o contra el Pontífice,” *Restauración Social* (May 1940): 20–30; “Cuidad del Vaticano,” *ibid.*, 39; on Belgium and Holland, *ibid.*, 53–56, 62–63.

18. “Lo que dijo el cardenal Arturo Hinsley Primado de Inglaterra en la Catedral de Westminster,” *Restauración Social* (June 1940): 125; “Un acto del Pontífice romano,” *Criterio*, no. 637 (1940).

19. “La Conferencia de la Habana,” *Restauración Social* (July 1940): 167–71; “Segunda Consulta entre los ministros de relaciones exteriores de las repúblicas americanas de conformidad con los acuerdos de Buenos Aires y de Lima,” *Conferencias Internacionales Americanas, Primer Suplemento (1938–1942)*, 131–67, La Habana, 21a, 30 July 1940. “Le cesación de las hostilidades por parte de Francia es el primer término de las demandas,” *El Pueblo*, 22 June 1940, 1; “Se firmó el Armisticio,” *El Pueblo*, 23 June 1940; Luis Barrantes Molina, “Las guerras y la paz,” *El Pueblo*, 4 Sept. 1940. See also Friedländer, *Pius XII*, 49–58; Gustavo J. Franceschi, “El deber actual de los cristianos,” *Academia Argentina de Letras*; he gave a series of four lectures in the cathedral in August 1940; *Restauración Social* (August 1940): 271–73; Acción Argentina was founded in July 1940. At the same, an opposing pro-Nazi organization, Afirmación Argentina, was created; see Manifesto de “Afirmación Argentina,” *Restauración Social* (Aug. 1940): 273–75; “Por la soberanía y la neutralidad,” Declaration of Afirmación Argentina, Solicitud, *El Pueblo*, 10 Nov. 1940.

20. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961); Joshua Buchler, “The role of the Waffen-SS Brigades in the Destruction of the Jews of Soviet Russia” (in Hebrew), *Yalkut Moreshet*, 41 (June 1986): 37–78; David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died* (New York: Random House, 1968).

21. See *REABA* (Aug. 1940): 514–19; *ibid.* (Oct. 1941): 638–42; *ibid.*, Nov. 1941, 695–704. The pope mentioned “a pagan streak, which is difficult to defeat,” *ibid.* (Aug. 1940): 515. Miguel de Andrea, “El papel de la Acción Católica en la reconstrucción de la Patria,” *Boletín ACA*, no. 231 (Aug. 1941): 6.

22. On the censure of the See of Buenos Aires, see *Boletín ACA*, no. 232, (Aug. 1941): 72–73.
23. “Disciplina Necesaria,” *Boletín ACA*, no. 232 (Aug, 1941).
24. Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, interview by Graciela Ben-Dror, Buenos Aires, 23 Aug. 1990.
25. Emilio Di Pasquo, “Resultados da una semana de estudios,” *Boletín ACA*, no. 235 (Nov. 1941): 257–61.
26. “Rusia en la guerra,” *El Pueblo*, 24 June 1941; Luis Barrantes Molina, “Comentario de la guerra,” *ibid.*, 2 June 1941; Virgilio Filippo, “Distinciones sin base,” *ibid.*, 3 Oct. 1941. Also Virgilio Filippo, “Libertad religiosa en la URSS,” *ibid.*, 14 Oct. 1941; “La guerra y los alcances comunistas,” *ibid.*, 6–7 Oct. 1941, 1.
27. “Antitotalitarismo falso,” *Criterio*, no. 706 (1941): 33.
28. “Los partidos de la hoz y el martillo,” *Criterio*, no. 702 (1941): 373–74; “Catolicismo y comunismo,” *Criterio*, no. 707 (1941): 56; “La patria marxista,” *ibid.*, 56–57.
29. “Pronósticos sobre la guerra,” *El Pueblo*, 19 Oct. 1941.
30. *El Pueblo*, 20–21 Oct. 1941.
31. “Nuestra neutralidad,” *El Pueblo*, 24 Oct. 1941; “Unas palabras sobre los agresores,” *ibid.*, 22 Oct. 1941.
32. The newspaper was recommended in various Catholic publications.
33. *El Pueblo*, 11 Jan. 1942, 14 Jan. 1942; *Criterio*, no. 724 (1942): 56–57.
34. *La Obra de Monseñor de Andrea* (Buenos Aires: FACE, n.d.); “Hacia la justicia social,” 15 May 1941 in *Pensamiento cristiano y democrático de Monseñor de Andrea* (Buenos Aires: FACE, 1965), 96–98; Conferencia pronunciada en la Facultad del Derecho y Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, 4 Sept. 1941, *ibid.*, 69–74. Following this lecture, de Andrea received a special greeting from President Roosevelt. See *REABA* (Jan. 1942): 70.
35. From a speech National Catholic Welfare Conference, Sept. 1942.
36. John King, *SUR, A Study of the Argentine Literary Journal and Its Role in the Development of a Culture, 1931–1979* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); see also the periodical *Orden Cristiano* 1941–1945 for quotations from the heads of the Catholic Church worldwide.
37. “Nuestra posición,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 Sept. 1941): 1–2.
38. *Ibid.*, 6.
39. Virgilio Filippo, *Con quién está usted? Inglaterra, Rusia, Alemania?* (Con las debidas licencias) (Buenos Aires, n.p., 1941).

40. Guillermina Oliveira de Ramos, “Una incomprensible actitud: el panfleto del R.P. Virgilio Filippo: *Con quién está usted?*” *Orden Cristiano* (15 Sept. 1941): 13–14. See also propaganda in Virgilio Filippo, “Con quién está usted?” *El Pueblo*, 2 Jan. 1941, 13; Jacques Maritain, “Cooperación y diversidad de credos,” *Orden Cristiano* (5 Oct. 1941): 3–4; Georges Bernanos, “Nación contra raza,” *Orden Cristiano* (9 Oct. 1941): 3–5. The journal emphasizes positions taken by world-famous Catholics, who joined the struggle against Nazism.

41. “La dirección contesta a ‘Alguien’,” *Orden Cristiano* (1 Nov. 1941): 15. “Matajacoibos,” the allusion is to *Clarinada* edited by Carlos Silveyra.

42. Eugenia Silveyra de Oyuela, “Un terrible peligro antiargentino, la deformación de las conciencias juveniles,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 Nov. 1941). Also see Theodore Maynard, “Los católicos y los nazis,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 Dec. 1941): 3–6, 15.

43. *Nuevo Orden* first appeared in July 1940, edited by Ernesto Palacio. *Nueva Política*, edited by Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, included many prominent Catholic intellectuals, such as Máximo Etchecopar, Héctor Bernardo, Carlos Ibarguren, Juan Pablo Oliver, Julio Meinvielle, Carlos Steffens Soler, and Héctor Llambías. Some of them appeared in both *Nuevo Orden* and *Nueva Política* and were activists in the Courses in Catholic Culture. On the power of the Catholic Church in Argentina, see Susan and Peter Calvert, *Argentina, Political Culture and Instability* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1989), 11–36. Much has been written on the nationalist movement; see Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Las Derechas. The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, 1890–1939* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 78–106, 193–247.

44. Antonio Giménez, “La guerra ruso-germana,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 53 (16 July 1941): 3; Julio Irazusta, “Maurras,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 73 (3 Dec. 1941): 9; José Luis Torres, “Algunas maneras de vender la patria,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 51 (2 July 1941): 11; Bruno Jacovella, “Repercusiones domésticas del conflicto germano-soviético,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 51 (2 July 1941): 3–4. Enrique Zuleta Álvarez, *El Nacionalismo argentino* (Buenos Aires: La Bastilla, 1975), 814–15; Serapio Lucero, “Los Nacionalistas y el liberalismo, *Nuevo Orden*, no. 53 (24 Sept. 1941): 2; Ernesto Palacio, “El Nacionalismo argentino y los filofascistas,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 54 (23 July 1941): 2; Palacio, “Filofascismo confusionista y extranjerizante,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 55 (30 July 1941): 1–2.

45. Bruno Jacovella, “Posibilidades y peligros de la post-guerra,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 63 (24 Sept. 1941): 5; “Pétain y Darlen obedecen a la lógica del real interés francés,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 59 (27 Aug. 1941), *Nuevo Orden*, no. 61 (10 Sept. 1941); Jacovella, “Los acontecimientos de Europa y la conciencia argentina,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 59 (27 Aug. 1941); Julio Irazusta, “El conflicto ruso-alemán,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 51 (2 July 1941): 4.

46. Floreal Forni, “Catolicismo y Peronismo” (I), *Unidos*, no. 14 (April 1984): 212–21.

47. Julio Irazusta, “Alemania y sus fines en la guerra actual,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 52 (9 July 1941): 2. Ernesto Palacio, “El Nacionalismo argentino y los filofascistas,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 52 (9 July 1941): 2–3; and “Filofascismo confusionista y extranjerizante,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 52 (9 July 1941): 1–2; Rodolfo Irazusta, “Influencias exóticas en la política argentina,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 57 (13 Aug. 1941); Héctor Llambías, “Sobre la paz, la guerra y otros juegos,” *Nueva Política* (Feb. 1941); Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, “Presencia del nacionalismo,” *Nueva Política* (July 1941): 5–8; “El manifesto de los radicales,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 57 (13 August 1941); M. Sánchez Sorondo, “A propósito de Boulanger,” *Nueva Política* (Nov. 1941): 154–55.

48. Enrique Osés in his newspaper *El Pampero* was not the only one who was anti-Zionist, but so were other nationalist publications like *Nuevo Orden*. See, for example, “La propaganda sionista,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 50 (25 June 1941). Ramón Doll, “El socialismo de Repetto y los judíos,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 52 (9 July 1941). José Nazareno, “Eichelbaum al día,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 53 (16 July 1941). Serapio Lucero, “Dualidad de criterio respecto a la propaganda extranjera,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 57 (18 Aug. 1941).

49. Ernesto Palacio, “Reacción y revolución, quienes representan hoy el progreso político?” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 61 (10 Sept. 1941); and “Enemigos del país, *Nuevo Orden*, no. 2 (25 July 1940); “El problema judío,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 90 (15 Apr. 1942). Raimundo G. Cardozo, “Doble aspecto de una maniobra conservadora,” *Nuevo Orden* no. 67 (22 Oct. 1941). R. Doll, “La idea del crisol de razas,” *Nueva Política* (Feb. 1942): 16–17; “Política internacional,” *Nueva Política* (Oct. 1942), 11; *ibid.* (Apr. 1941): 3–4, *ibid.* (June 1941): 24, 26. Alianza da la Juventud Nacionalista, *Postulados de nuestra lucha* (Buenos Aires: n.p., n.d.), 5.

50. See *El Pampero*, edited by Enrique Osés. He was the editor of *Criterio* in 1930–1932, later joined *Crisol* and was its editor from 1934 after the death of the antisemitic priest Alberto Molas Terán; from 1939 onwards he was

editor of *El Pampero*. The nationalists themselves saw *El Pampero* as the mouthpiece of Argentinean Nazis. *El Pampero* was extremely popular in nationalist Catholic circles, among others, as testified by Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo in his interview with the writer in 1990.

51. The debate did not prevent recommendations of *El Pampero* and agreement with its point of view as in *Nuevo Orden*, no. 63 (24 Aug. 1941) and no. 65 (8 Oct. 1941). “Nazismo de un Coordinado,” *La Voz del Plata*, no. 4 (1 July 1942): 5; “El nacionalista Dr. Manuel Fresco,” *ibid.*, no. 3 (26 June 1942): 5; “Vamos Dr. Fresco,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 44 (14 May 1941); *ibid.*, no. 56 (6 Aug. 1941): 15; *ibid.*, no. 73 (3 Dec. 1941).

52. José María de Estrada, “La recuperación de las cosas,” *Sol y Luna*, no. 7 (1942): 75. *Sol y Luna*, with a Hispanic orientation, first appeared in November 1938; see editorials of Juan Carlos Goyeneche, and *idem*, *Ensavos, artículos, discursos* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Dictio, 1976), 141–56.

53. “Nuestra raza,” *Nueva Política* (Oct. 1941): 2–3. “Hazañas de antipatria,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 68 (29 Oct. 1941); *ibid.*, no. 55 (30 July 1941).

54. Raúl Rivero de Olázabal, *Por una cultura católica* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Claretiana, 1986).

55. Conferencias Internacionales Americanas, Primer Suplemento—1938–1942 (Washington, D.C. 1943).

56. Enrique P. Osés, “Uniremos a los argentinos,” *Crisol*, 1 May 1941; editorial in *Neuva Política* (Mar. 1941); Héctor Sáenz y Quesada, “Qué sería una política imperial...,” *ibid.* (Feb. 1941); “Lobos con piel de cordero,” *Cabildo*, 16 Dec. 1942.

57. The issue was prominent in 1942, e.g., *Nueva Política* (Apr. 1942): 7; *ibid.*, (May 1942): 6–7. See also: *Nuevo Orden*, no. 77 (14 Jan. 1942): 6; *Nueva Política* (Feb. 1942): 5–6; Marcelo S. Sorondo, “Hispano América o South America,” *ibid.*, 11–12; and compare the list of participants in the Courses in Catholic Culture compiled by one of them, Raúl Rivero de Olázabal, *Por una cultura católica*, 229–35, and the signatories to the petition of the nationalist movement, as given in a detailed list by one of its activists, Manuel de Lezica, *Recuerdos de un nacionalista* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Astral, 1968), 105–14. See also Graciela Ben-Dror, “The Catholic Church in Argentina and the Jewish People during the Holocaust Era, 1933–1945” (Ph.D. diss. Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993), 470, Appendix 10.

58. See Christian Buchrucker, *Nacionalismo y Peronismo La Argentina en la crisis ideológica mundial (1927–1955)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1987), 227–29. On his antisemitic tendencies and his sources of inspiration, see Goyeneche, *Ensayos*, 85, 156, 165, 190–92, 344–46, 361–63, 410. For his opinions in the 1960s, see “Reflexiones con Mayúscula sobre el caso Eichmann,” *ibid.*, 522–25.

59. Luis Barrantes Molina, “El cristianismo y la guerra actual,” *El Pueblo*, 11 Jan. 1942. On the supportive Catholic attitude during the Rio de Janeiro conference, see *El Pueblo*, daily 25–30 Jan. 1942.

60. “Una circular del Arzobispado desautorizando que se den conferencias en ‘Acción Argentina’ por parte del clero,” *El Pueblo*, 20 Jan. 1942; also *La Nación*, 19 Jan. 1942. Franceschi’s explanation of the whole affair appears in *Criterio*, no. 726 (1942): 105–106.

61. “Declaración episcopal,” *Criterio*, no. 724 (1942): 56.

62. *Ibid.*, 56. This is linked to the declarations of the pope on June 29, 1941 after the German invasion of the USSR and his Christmas sermon of December 24, 1941. “Su tradicional política de respeto a todas las soberanías reafirmó nuestro país, en Río de Janeiro,” *El Pueblo*, 21 Jan. 1942. On the official document of *Acción Católica* see Luis Barrantes Molina, “Normas para los jóvenes de Acción Católica,” *El Pueblo*, 25 Nov. 1942. On neutrality, see *El Pueblo*, 9 Dec. 1942; “La absoluta imparcialidad del Papa,” *ibid.*, 14–15 Dec. 1942; “El mensaje del Papa,” *ibid.*, 27 Dec. 1942; “En esta nueva Navidad de guerra,” *ibid.*, 25 Dec. 1942. For details on the Church’s position in favor of neutrality, see “Razones en que se funda la neutralidad argentina,” *El Pueblo*, 21 Oct. 1943; 22 Oct. 1943, 9; 23 Oct. 1943, 9; 24 Oct. 1943, 11; 25–26 Oct. 1943. On the debate between Msgr. Agustín Barrère and the German ambassador, see “Los católicos argentinos y la guerra,” *MREyC*, División Política. Alemania. Expediente 8, 1940.

CHAPTER 8

The Argentinean Church and the Plight of European Jewry, 1938–1942

The anti-Jewish pogroms that took place in Germany, culminating in the destruction of *Kristallnacht* on November 9–10, 1938 shocked public opinion in the Western world. The changes in Germany that resulted from discriminatory legislation based on racist ideology gave rise to a regime of violence directed against its Jewish citizens. When the Nuremberg laws were promulgated in 1935 their severity and implications were not immediately understood. But *Kristallnacht* and its terrifying accompaniments—arson, destruction, murder, collective fines, and imprisonment in concentration camps—were deemed to be of unusual brutality. Many governments and groups in the West rejected this violence and publicly condemned Nazi Germany.¹

Voices from all sections of society were raised in Argentina: from socialist, liberal, and Catholic circles. The assassination of the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath by a Jewish youth in Paris was widely reported in liberal circles in Buenos Aires, which also noted the wave of antisemitism in France that followed. There was bitter and unequivocal condemnation in Argentina of the violence unleashed throughout the Third Reich. It was expressed by members of Congress belonging to the Radical, Socialist, and Progressive Democratic parties, who were joined by the League of Argentinean Women for Peace, the Civil Rights League, the Committee against Racism and Antisemitism led by the communist Emilio Troise, and the Central Workers' Party.²

The socialists in particular were actively opposed to the Nazi atrocities. They circulated the latest information and published editorials about events in Germany in the socialist organ *La Vanguardia*, and organized a protest meeting against the “Nazi barbarians” on November 18, 1938. Openly condemning Nazi Germany, they expressed sympathy for the Jews in their plight, and charged Britain, led by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, with “collaboration” with Hitler, as seen in that country’s “silence” about the

persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany.³ Several members of the Argentinean Congress spoke at this protest meeting: Alicia Moreau de Justo, Enrique Dickman, and the chairman, Mario Bravo. The Hebraica Society (a Jewish cultural organization) and the Jewish communist organization also participated in the protest meeting.

The liberal press supplied information about the increasing severity of the racial laws in Italy, and how this affected Jewish property; on the likelihood that in a very few years no Jews at all would be left in Austria; and on the possibility of a solution for the persecuted Jews—in British Guyana. The increased death rate among German Jews as a result of their fear of imprisonment in concentration camps, or from heart attacks caused by stress also drew the attention of the liberal press. It constantly reported the suffering of the Jews, the changes in Nazi policy, and the proposed option of securing the release of German Jews in exchange for foreign currency.⁴ In view of the foregoing, what was the reaction of Catholic circles representing the Church to the events of *Kristallnacht*?

THE SILENCE OF THE ARGENTINEAN CHURCH

The response of the Buenos Aires diocese may be compared to that of Paris, London, or Munich. Between November 8 and 10, 1938 a council of bishops convened in the Argentine capital, but it is unclear whether its participants were aware of the events of *Kristallnacht*, which occurred at precisely that time. Outside the deliberations of the council, it is clear that the citizens of Buenos Aires knew about the assassination of vom Rath, while details of the increasingly violent antisemitic campaign being conducted in Germany reached the city daily by telegraph from Europe.⁵

The first reports about *Kristallnacht* may well have reached the assembled bishops by the end of their meeting, and this catalyzed the council's decision to issue a declaration "against totalitarianism" and "against racism." Yet after more details about the German pogrom became known, the Argentinean Church hierarchy made no protest or condemnation of this harsh assault on German Jewry.⁶

The Catholic press did print statements by bishops in other parts of the world who publicly condemned this violent antisemitism as being against the tenets of Christianity, but the upper echelons of the Argentinean Church maintained their public silence, and moreover, the see of Buenos Aires continued to recommend exceptionally antisemitic literature, such as the

book *Sistemas genialmente antisociales* (Patently anti-social systems) by the fanatic antisemitic priest Virgilio Filippo. In it, the author equated Bolshevik communism with Judaism in their common attempt to undermine Christian society. The recommendation for this book was published about a month after *Kristallnacht*, at the height of the public debate that followed it. The publicity stated, among other things, that the book was suitable for the promotion of Catholic sociological concepts, so that minds befogged by various errors would know how to react correctly to “corrupt doctrines that poison them.”⁷ Filippo’s book had a nihil obstat and imprimatur—authorization from the bishop indicating that nothing in it contradicted Catholic teaching. Clearly, the Buenos Aires diocese was at the very least indifferent to antisemitism and the suffering of the Jews.

The Catholic Press Reaction: Los Principios

The Catholic press, unlike the leadership, did not remain silent. Readers of *Los Principios*, the veteran Catholic newspaper of the important province of Córdoba, were provided with objective information, together with accounts of worsening violence “against Heaven” throughout the Reich and in Austria. However, the double message implied in these reports was quite obvious, since they frequently were often accompanied by comments reflecting Nazi propaganda. A quote from the Reich propaganda minister Goebbels on November 12 insisted that “Germany will continue to punish the Jews if they persist in attacking the Reich.” The paper also reported on the growing number of Jews attempting to flee Germany.⁸

On November 18, 1938, *Los Principios* condemned the “pagan persecution” in the Third Reich, adding, “There can be no justification for the persecution of innocent humans only because they were born to a certain race.”⁹ The newspaper took an unequivocal and unprecedented stand against the violent Nazi racism, without any words of reproof against the Jews, as if to balance the picture. Apparently, faced with the growing violence following *Kristallnacht*, some Catholics in the Córdoba diocese began to feel pangs of mercy and compassion for the sufferings of the Jews in Germany.

Reactions in the Buenos Aires Newspaper El Pueblo

The Buenos Aires Catholic newspaper, *El Pueblo*, which was read in the provinces as well, printed a headline on November 11 that “In Berlin and All Cities of the Reich Persecution of the Jews Has Become General.” There were substantial reports about riots and attacks on Jewish businesses, along

with the burning of synagogues in Munich, Cologne, Frankfurt, Potsdam, Nuremberg, Leipzig, and elsewhere. The newspaper termed this "an expression of unprecedented violence" as groups of young Nazis led the rioters, who attacked the Jews while bystanders watched impassively and the police did not intervene.

El Pueblo reported that German politicians declared that this was "a historic day" because the assassination in Paris and the consequent events throughout Germany were "a turning point in the international policy of the Reich." The Catholic reader was likewise informed that the Germans levied a fine of one billion marks on the Jewish community, this being, according to the German source, about ten percent of the total wealth of the Jews of the Reich. The estimate of the Jews being worth ten billion marks was reached even after they had been forced to sell their landed property—valued at some 20 billion marks—at a fraction of its real worth.

The Catholic press in Buenos Aires, like that of Córdoba, quoted Goebbels frequently without identifying him as the German minister of propaganda. For example, Goebbels stated that the events in Germany were a spontaneous reaction of the German populace. Henceforth, he said, "the government will follow a policy aimed at solving the Jewish problem in a way desired by the German people," and "we ascribe the assassination of vom Rath to some international organization." The newspaper made no independent comment on the Goebbels statement, nor did it attempt to distinguish what actually happened from the version put out by his office.

The Catholic daily also carried items from Western news agencies, such as reports on the imprisonment in Frankfurt of men aged eighteen to sixty, and British condemnation of the events in the Third Reich. It quoted a statement by the head of the Church of England in the *Times* of London. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang, criticized the general silence in the world when, on the pretext of an individual act of revenge by a Jewish youth, the Germans began an intolerable campaign of murder. He announced that the following Sunday the Anglican Church would offer a "prayer for the persecuted." The steadfast stand of the Catholic Archbishop of Munich, Michael von Faulhaber, was also sympathetically reported. When he was attacked by Nazi bands for decrying "persecution by pagan racism," *El Pueblo* reported that European Catholic press came to his defense, and commended his courageous stand for "religious freedom" and "the rights of the Church." The French press also ridiculed the "popular spontaneity," stressing that "in a country so well organized, the police failed to put out the

fires in even one synagogue.” Yet despite this flood of information that cast doubt on the official German announcements, the Argentinean Catholic press continued to issue dry reports on “Semitic” issues, with no display of a clear stand on the events in Germany.¹⁰

On November 17, a call was issued by Catholics in the United States for urgent aid for the Jews of Germany and for offers of safe haven for them outside Europe. They demanded the abolition of immigration quotas and the opening of the gates of their country to Jewish refugees. Unlike the Americans, Argentinean Catholics, represented by *El Pueblo*, warned against the admission of such a wave of unplanned and undesirable immigration.

Accordingly, we may recall that the first editorial published in *El Pueblo* after *Kristallnacht* stressed “the national interest” and the “maintenance of Catholic unity,” while completely ignoring the suffering of the persecuted Jews. The headline read “To Rule Is to Populate Correctly,” amending J. S. Alberdi’s maxim “To rule is to populate.” The editor acknowledged the need to populate Argentina as an essential condition for its development. But he emphasized the type of population required and the conditions that should be demanded of them: “First and foremost, the need is for social spirit and morals, that is, a way of life which, with time, will not develop into centers of social corruption”. He warned that

At a time when confrontations, based on political and racial causes, are taking place in Europe, you must beware that these persecuted masses do not fall upon us, the Christians, while they are still full of anger and hatred, resulting from their suffering and persecution.

Without stating it directly, it was clear that the editor wanted the gates of Argentina shut against Jewish immigration. Instead, he proposed opening Argentina “to groups of immigrants better able to acclimatize to our country, its spirit and our Christian morals.”¹¹

Religious and cultural homogeneity was the supreme aim, with “Argentinean nationality” identified only with “Catholicism.”

Jewish Immigration and the Reaction of Criterio

As we know, *Criterio* was the most influential intellectual Catholic journal in Argentina. The first issue to be published after *Kristallnacht* appeared on November 17. Its editor, Franceschi, condemned the “barbaric violence” of the Nazis and called Nazism “the wild and angry monster.” In his words, “there is no need to be philo-Semitic to understand the dimensions of the catastrophe. It is enough to be a Christian, enough to be human, to condemn

this unbridled violence.” But Franceschi maintained his customary “balanced” approach, charging the Jews with “Hebrew exaggerations,” even though these did not legitimize the Nazi behavior.

The “violent solution” to the Jewish problem was unacceptable to official Catholicism in the 1930s. At the same time, the Argentinean Catholic solution was “the right of self-defense and the limits imposed on the entry into our country of those who do not fit in with our race....”¹² This position was echoed by the Catholic newspaper, and to reinforce his “even-handedness,” a week later Franceschi protested that the whole world was in an uproar over the persecution of the Jews in Germany, while remaining relatively unconcerned about worldwide persecution of the Catholics.¹³

The Jewish Spanish-language weekly *Mundo Israelita* welcomed the condemnation of Nazi violence by Franceschi, “an additional Catholic voice that has joined the protest against Nazi terror,” and described his November 17 piece as “a brave article,” considering the situation in Argentina. In Jewish eyes, the Jews of Argentina were not supported by the Catholics as were the Jews of France and England by their Catholic communities. The editor asked: “Where is our Maritain, who will publicly defend the Jews of Argentina in such turbulent times?”¹⁴

News about prominent Catholic personalities in Europe who opposed the Nazi actions in Germany was given wide publicity in the Argentinean Catholic press. One example was a report on the declaration of Cardinal J. Verdier, the Archbishop of Paris, who claimed that the catastrophic results of antisemitism were clear to all, and he regarded it as “one of the greatest dangers which ever threatened humanity.”¹⁵ By the end of 1938, no one of his stature had arisen in Argentina, and apart from ambiguous expressions by intellectuals like Franceschi, hardly any voices of Catholic priests, lay intellectuals, or Church dignitaries were heard.

THE DEBATE BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND JEWS

The Jews of Argentina organized a week of mourning. Monday, November 21 was declared a day of prayer, and Jewish businessman and professionals were asked to close their premises from noon. Some neighbors of Jewish businessmen, as well as the socialist press showed understanding of the feelings of the Jewish community, but the Catholic community as a whole kept silent.¹⁶

Franceschi steadfastly clung to his demand for equality between the world's outcry and intervention on behalf of the persecuted Jews, and that on behalf of Catholics. Again he averred that "the actions and the influence of the Jews are not in our interests." He did, however, condemn

even the shadow of any racist or totalitarian political doctrine. The Jewish question finds us on the side of justice and mercy. We protest the exaggerated brutality and violence, of which the Jews in the past few weeks have been the victims, while the National Socialist regime has done nothing except to fan the flames.¹⁷

Franceschi's declaration on "justice and mercy" soon came into conflict with any actual willingness to receive Jewish refugees from Europe. He chose to ignore—in a rational and calculated manner—the cruel realities that had forced the refugees to seek this solution, eschewing the "justice and mercy" he had just before endorsed so proudly. The problem of the Jewish refugees who had fled Europe to Latin America, and then managed to slip into Argentina, came to a head in mid-December 1938. Franceschi, on the principle of "the defense of Argentina in face of the crisis in Europe," hardened his position on the illegal infiltrators. He charged them with taking their first steps in Argentina by breaking its laws, using the power of money and corruption.

"The Jewish problem in Germany involves us only to a certain degree, but no further." The primary aim was to accommodate the Argentinean national interest, namely to safeguard the homogeneous Integral Catholic nature of the state. Franceschi demanded that "these Jewish infiltrators be considered undesirable elements, destined for speedy expulsion." It is easy to interpret this position as "legalistic," but his approach was no different in regard to the legal entry of Jews into the country: "We understand the situation of the Jews expelled from the Reich, but to the same degree we understand that Argentina cannot accept them because it is already full of Jews."¹⁸ The areas of Jewish settlement should not be allowed to develop into "a separate Jewish colony," and Franceschi suggested to Jews who were unwilling to accept the conditions of Christianity, namely abandoning their Jewish heritage, should leave the country. He did not mean the recent arrivals: "If these conditions are uncomfortable for them, the gates are wide open to them to leave the country."¹⁹

A bitter debate between Catholics and Jews developed in the press, with the gap between declarations and actions growing ever wider. The hope expressed by the Jewish editor that Jewish refugees be allowed into

Argentina was interpreted by Franceschi as a request for “special privileges, or special status for Jews—and this is the height of impertinence.” The source of antisemitism, he believed, was the objectionable behavior of the Jews themselves. According to Franceschi,

Those who are not philo-Semites or Judaizers are amazed to discover that the Jews themselves are the ones who, more than any others, cause the lack of sympathy and solidarity that they so need and so loudly demand.²⁰

Franceschi explained that in countries “where there is not the least hint of prejudice or racism, as in our country, the Jews themselves are the only cause of antisemitism.”²¹ Furthermore, his stance against the “barbarian violence” did not prevent him from publishing on the pages of *Criterio* three months later a recommendation for Virgilio Filippo’s antisemitic book *Los judíos* (The Jews), noting the “valuable” contribution of this book and the author’s approach, which was “defensive” and not “aggressive.” In his opinion one of the most dangerous characteristics of the Jews was, indeed, the narrow-minded racism of the Children of Israel. Publication of the book and Filippo’s broadcasts on the issue of communism sparked a public debate. Many expressions of antisemitism were aired calling Jewry and Bolshevism two sides of the same coin. Filippo’s lectures that followed the publication of *Los judíos* were banned from the air, however, and Franceschi claimed this was the result of intervention by influential Jews, supported by two members of Congress, who protested to the Ministry of the Interior. Franceschi considered the book to be “a valuable addition to the public discussion on the Jewish problem.” His only reservation was that Filippo did not deal sufficiently with the theological nature of the problem, which “is a most essential ingredient of the Catholic perspective on the Jewish problem.”²²

No significant change in Catholic attitudes was evident even after the events in Germany. Virgilio Filippo’s books continued to be promoted in the official organ of the Church in December 1938 and August 1939. His newer works dealt mainly with communism, but overt and covert antisemitism could be found in all of them. Their wide circulation, with Church approval, once again proved that antisemitism was deeply rooted throughout the Church, from the highest echelons of the hierarchy to the parish priests.

In contrast to the reaction of the Church in other countries in the wake of *Kristallnacht*, the Argentinean Church was silent. There were declarations against racism and violence, but traditional antisemitism continued, as was evident in the promotion of publications such as the books by Filippo.

Reports of Nazi atrocities against Germany's Jewish citizens did not arouse sympathy for the Jews, and the potential for Jewish refugees to seek asylum in Argentina was perceived as a threat. Official Catholic publications continued to take the stance that Jewish immigration be restricted.

THE WARTIME PLIGHT OF EUROPEAN JEWS IN CATHOLIC EYES

Indifference

Following the invasion of Poland, the German occupiers initiated a brutal policy toward the Jews there. Their property was confiscated, men were taken for forced labor, and ghettos were established in the main cities. Life for Poland's Jews soon became unbearable.²³ What kind of information about events in Europe reached Argentina? What was the reaction of the Church in Argentina to news about the ghettos, the anti-Jewish violence, deportations, and the establishment of concentration camps?

News from Europe, as reported by Catholic sources, were primarily concerned with Catholic institutions. Details about the persecution of the Catholic Church in Poland by the Nazi conquerors began to arrive in Argentina at the beginning of 1940 via the Catholic Press Association. *Criteria* published accounts of this "anti-Christian persecution" in Poland, where observers described the aim of the Nazi invaders as nothing less than "the destruction of Christianity." A report by Dr. Casimiro Pappe, the Polish ambassador to the Vatican, was published in Rome on January 30, 1940, based on information supplied by Poland's most senior cardinal. It included a detailed list of Polish priests murdered after the occupation, aggression committed against the clergy as a whole, and a list of churches destroyed by the Nazis and monasteries they had nationalized. On March 14, 1940, the pope issued a statement for the first time. In it he said, "The world has lost mercy, because it denied mercy and will not find peace if it does not follow the path of mercy, a path based on justice alone."²⁴

The pope's Easter sermon on March 24 painted a bleak picture of the times, the break-up of harmony and fraternity among nations, and the unilateral violation of agreements. He listed Nazi acts and crimes against the population of Catholic Poland during and after the invasion, yet stopped short of condemning Germany. The declaration was of a general, religious, and abstract nature.²⁵

After the beginning of the war and the conquest of Western Europe, Argentinean Catholics close to the Church hierarchy adopted a clear-cut

position favoring Church intervention in matters pertaining to “social morality.”²⁶ Did this principle hold true when Jews were the principal victims of the absence of “social morality”? The attitude to incoming news of the fate of the Jews of Europe may be better understood if we bear in mind the Argentinean Church’s opposition in principle to racism and totalitarianism. It promoted a conservative regime at home, a policy of neutrality in the war, and strict adherence to Vatican guidelines.

In 1940, the Catholic press published very little about events in occupied Poland, and nothing on the fate and the suffering of its Jews. A wide range of attitudes toward the Jews was evident among Argentinean Catholics, from aversion and attacks against the Jews at one extreme, to sympathy and expressions of Christian compassion at the other. These attitudes were adopted on the basis of general information about Nazi policies toward the Jewish populations in occupied countries. Information came from Western news agencies and was published in the liberal, socialist, and Jewish press.²⁷ The Jews appeared as “the first victims” of a cultural religious war under Nazi sponsorship. Special mention was made that the scientist Albert Einstein had left Germany because of Nazi persecution and had gone to the United States. The local Catholic press had a brief report on the July 1940 regime change in Romania that was followed by anti-Jewish attacks, as well as mention of antisemitic incidents in the Nazi satellite countries.²⁸ At the same time, however, Luis Barrantes Molina of *El Pueblo* took the opportunity to attack Jews, associating them with the Freemasons whom Pius IX had called “the synagogue of Satan.”²⁹

The Catholic dailies published news stories about Jews, but with a significant anti-Jewish bias. One source of new items was the Italian press, which reported, for example, that “the Jewish problem in Palestine has been solved by the mass expulsion of Jews from the country”—in other words, even in Palestine, Jews were not wanted.³⁰ The Salesians too, whose opposition to Nazism grew after the conquest of Poland, published great quantities of material concerning the economic and social suffering of Polish Catholics.³¹ Their comments on the fate of the Jews after the outbreak of war in September 1939 reflected long-held Catholic prejudices, and the Jews were wholly identified both with American capitalist excesses and with the communist regime in the USSR which had invaded eastern Poland and the Baltic States:

Organized Jewry, resident in Fifth Avenue in New York and in the Kremlin in Moscow, are the authors of the information about false

trials, wickedness, and slaughter. The Jew is the great initiator of Communism and any fruit of Christian deeds must, in his opinion, disappear.³²

The Salesians likened those who collaborated with the Nazis to “Judas Iscariot” and “traitors,” and did not perceive the reference to Jesus’ betrayer as antisemitic.³³ At the same time, they derided those who rejoiced at the expulsion of the Jews from the Polish Corridor because Christians should oppose any kind of forced emigration, whether of Jews, or of Russians in the Baltic States and occupied parts of Poland. The expulsion orders of “the leaders of Berlin” were tantamount to “modern barbarism.”³⁴ While opposed to the Nazis, the Salesians did not forget their opposition to atheistic communism, which they linked to Freemasons and Jews. “Anti-Christian Communism is completely anti-religious, therefore many of its adherents are Freemasons or members of organized Jewry. Communists, Freemasons and Jews belong to one organization and have a common mentality.”³⁵

The *Blitzkrieg* brought the Jews of Western Europe under Nazi rule, and anti-Jewish measures were soon enforced. France’s Vichy government passed legislation that severely limited the rights of Jews living in France. In July 1940 the employment of aliens, namely Jews, was prohibited in all public and government institutions. On August 16, “aliens” were similarly banned from professions such as medicine, pharmacy, and dentistry; this order applied also to the French possessions in North Africa. Following the lead of Germany, on October 3, 1940 the Vichy government published the “Jewish code,” whereby Jews of French nationality were barred from the civil service, the army, educational and judicial services, and the film industry. In only a few exceptional cases were Jews permitted to remain in these occupations.

The Jews of Western Europe were ordered to wear a yellow Star of David, and underwent a protracted and difficult period of denial of rights, economic dispossession, racial discrimination, confiscation of property, and deportation. The process ended with liquidation under the Final Solution.³⁶

How did Argentinean Catholics react to reports about the anti-Jewish legislation of the Vichy government in October 1940? It was said that Jewish lives and property were not threatened, only that Jews were to be removed from the civil service. Such legislation was accepted without demur by the Catholic public and by the Church hierarchy in Argentina.³⁷ The lightning victory of the Germans in France, the partition of the country, and the establishment of a puppet government in Vichy, on the other hand, brought

about increased identification of most Argentinean Catholics with the Pétain government, which they understood to reflect the needs of French Catholicism. Indifference to the Jews and their distress following the new anti-Jewish laws arose from their heightened expectations of the perceived opportunities offered by the establishment of the Vichy government. They saw it as an authoritative, anti-liberal regime, which would preserve the “national revolution,” secure the status of the Catholic Church and protect its rights, unlike the republican governments that had preceded it.³⁸ The fall of the French republic and the establishment of the Vichy government was explained in Argentina as resulting from the anti-religious stance of the government. Thus, the Salesian publications supported the Vichy government.

Only at the end of 1941, did the Salesian publications reject the extreme antisemitism that had infected many sections of the Catholic public of Argentina. Those sections supported the Nazis and expressed loathing for the Left, which attacked Pétain as a “Fascist and totalitarian leader,” as well as the Nazis, who had “uncovered Bolsheviks, Jews and Freemasons even inside the Vatican.”³⁹

THE STAND AGAINST EUTHANASIA

Loyal to Vatican and its directives, the Argentinean Church after 1937 and 1938 stressed the errors of racism and the great chasm between Nazism and Christian doctrine in its official organs and in statements by prominent individuals in the hierarchy. Publications and declarations of Argentinean Catholic Action and writings of prominent clergymen made various attempts to reconcile Nazism and Christianity. As noted in an earlier chapter, the Argentinean Church did not draw on the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* as often as it addressed the issues raised by *Divini Redemptoris*. Catholic organizations did take a clear position against racism, even though it wasn’t a significant issue in the country. However, we mustn’t forget that when immigration issues arose, there was a desire to encourage the immigration of Hispanics and Catholics.⁴⁰

The tendency to support fascist regimes, as evinced in the public debate over the views of the French Catholic, Jacques Maritain, who as early as 1936 condemned fascism and supported humanist values, became more significant after the outbreak of the war and the Nazi conquest of Poland and Western Europe. The demand for cooperation with fascist regimes was not

considered contrary to Christian doctrine *per se*, and many Argentinean Catholics were able to suggest that a link between these regimes was good for Christianity. A bitter debate was waged on the pages of *Criteria* and of the liberal periodical *Sur*, which supported the Allies. The Church hierarchy did not risk taking a political stand or siding with either view, but unofficially the Church clearly supported the government's position of neutrality.⁴¹

Reports about the German euthanasia program reached the Holy See in November 1940.⁴² German ambassador Bergen in Rome reported back to the German Foreign Ministry that the euthanasia policy had affected Pope Pius XII more than any other action in Germany and its occupied territories. On December 2, 1940 the Holy See published a written statement that was also broadcast insisting that "it is impermissible to kill people who are considered a burden on society and hamper the state, by any Government decree."⁴³

The issue was raised among Argentinean Catholics, as well. *Criteria* quoted a report in *L'Osservatore Romano* on the Pope's decree condemning the deliberate killing of the chronically sick, crippled, or mentally ill, "for this action transgresses against positive natural and divine laws." In June 1941 Catholic news sources in Argentina published a figure of more than 100,000 patients who had been put to death in Germany on the grounds that they were "a burden on society":

It was in the region of Württemberg, that the first tests in killing by gas were conducted in facilities designed specifically for this purpose. The diseased were brought in from the mental asylums in buses whose windows had been painted black to hide the passengers. In these vehicles, special installations discharged poisonous gases. There are now several more of these facilities in Germany and it is expected that in the near future all the mentally retarded will have been eliminated. There is apprehension that the same action will be taken against the inmates of homes for the aged.⁴⁴

Information about the euthanasia program was apparently known in detail in Argentina even before it was known by the bishop of Münster, C. A. von Galen, who preached a sermon in August 1941 condemning the program. Hitler ordered a halt to this atrocity when the voice of Catholic protest was raised in more and more churches. The issue continued to arouse interest in Argentina.⁴⁵ *El Pueblo* reported it, but strove to keep its coverage low-key.⁴⁶ To maintain "objectivity," as it were, *El Pueblo* printed a variety of news from a several sources to convince its readers that the Nazis were untainted. For example, an item from the German Transocean news agency denied that

the German occupation authorities in France had arrested priests. *El Pueblo* ran a daily feature entitled “Berlin Diary,” aimed at the ongoing inculcation of Nazi propaganda. It wanted to show that the Catholic Church in Germany was independent and that religious life there continued unhindered. *El Pueblo* drew its information from the German news agency, as it continued to do until the severance of diplomatic relations with Germany in January 1944.⁴⁷

El Pueblo almost completely ignored information about German concentration camps, whereas *Criteria* published in considerable detail information concerning Catholic clergy who had been sent to concentration camps. Yet in 1940 nothing was said about the fate of the Jews. The distress of European Jewry in that year was of very little concern to the Catholic press, and in 1941 it was ignored entirely.⁴⁸

THE POSSIBILITY OF RESCUE FOR “NON-ARYAN CATHOLICS”

The general position of Cardinal Copello was reflected in his attitude to the “non-Aryan Catholics” of the expanded Germany. As the Nuremberg laws began to be applied, many Jews who had converted to Catholicism—considered Christian in every way—began to face severe problems, which caused concern in the German Church. According to the racist criteria, these Christians were still considered Jews, but Jewish organizations refused to take them under their wing. On January 24, 1939, the converts’ position became even more difficult when Goering ordered the Ministry of the Interior to solve the Jewish problem by enforcing mass emigration.⁴⁹

In March 1939, Cardinal Copello was in Rome for the election of Pope Pius XII. There he learned of the impending expulsion of German non-Aryan Catholics. On March 13, he met Archbishop Michael von Faulhaber of Munich, who requested in his own name and that of Bishop Wilhelm Berning of Innsbrück and Archbishop Bertram of Breslau, that Copello and the archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, Sebastião Leme, intervene with their respective governments to allow the immigration of non-Aryan Catholics to their countries.⁵⁰

In their efforts to help non-Aryan Catholics to leave Germany, Archbishop Faulhaber and Bishop Bering wrote to Pius XII in March 1939 requesting that he negotiate with the governments of Brazil and Argentina for entry permits for non-Aryan Catholics, most of them converted Jews. Faulhaber explained to the pope that this migration was highly problematic because these countries had limited immigration quotas “to prevent themselves from

being flooded with Jews," and the quotas for 1939 had already been filled.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Faulhaber requested the pope's intervention in view of the increasing severity of the problem in Greater Germany. He understood that the police were pressing for speedy and massive emigration, and he had already heard of cases in which "'non-Aryan Catholics' had been ordered to leave Germany within ten days or they would be sent to camps."⁵² He reminded the pope that two months earlier, when he [the pope] was still Secretary of the Vatican, he had issued a "historic document" requesting bishops throughout the world to set up committees for the aid of some 200,000 Catholic refugees of non-Aryan extraction. Central coordination would be by the Raphaelsverein, a Catholic organization founded in 1871 for the protection of German immigrants, with its headquarters in Hamburg and Bishop Wilhelm Berning presiding, which had begun to assist the converts. Faulhaber, knowing that the chances of emigration to Brazil were better, informed the pope that that country had already authorized 3,000 visas for Jewish refugees; these had not been utilized because the Brazilian government had been unwilling to fulfill its commitment. There was no specific reference to Argentina's willingness.

In his letter to the Pope, Faulhaber noted that it was right to ask for help for non-Aryan Catholics, considering "the historical significance of such a gesture for the Vatican" in approaching the Brazilian government. The papal nuncio approached the government on April 14, 1939, asking the Brazilian government to authorize use of the 3,000 visas. Under the presidency of Getulio Vargas, the government finally assented on June 23, 1939, but implementation proved difficult from the start.⁵³ By September 1939, the general secretary of the Raphaelsverein, Max Grosser, realized that the chances of receiving the 3,000 visas for Brazil were fading, and that other countries had to be turned to immediately. He met the papal nuncio, Cesare Orsenigo, in Berlin and suggested that he, too, approach the pope in the hope that his good relations with Buenos Aires (he had attended the October 1934 International Eucharistic Congress there) would help the refugees. Grosser mentioned several factors that might facilitate the emigration of non-Aryan Catholics to Argentina. The Argentinean Foreign Minister, Dr. José M. Cantilo, had announced in parliament in Buenos Aires a plan to accept 1,000 Jewish families from Europe, so the subject of increasing immigration quotas was on the agenda.

The pope could approach the issue on the basis that some of the visas might be allocated to non-Aryan Catholics, and the chances of this being

accepted was considered to be good. Grosser noted previous steps taken in this direction in Argentina, such as the establishment of a committee for assistance to non-Aryan Catholics following the pope's appeal to the Catholic world in January 1939. The committee's chairman was Fortunato Devoto, an auxiliary bishop to Cardinal Copello, and the committee was run by the Verbo Divino order.⁵⁴

During the war the flow of requests to the Vatican regarding non-Aryan Catholics never ceased. The archbishop of Vienna, Theodor Innitzer and the Jesuit priest, L. Born, head of the office for non-Aryans, did their utmost to influence the Vatican on their behalf until September 1941. Innitzer observed that the Church in Argentina was a good, albeit exceptional case, for there, at least a committee for assistance to non-Aryan Catholics had been set up, whereas in other places nothing had been done, "to my great sorrow." "I am convinced," Innitzer wrote in a letter to the Vatican on February 1941, "that what was done in Argentina could have been done in many other Latin American states, but especially in the U.S."⁵⁵ Many other leading personalities in the Catholic Church worldwide continued to regard Argentina as the country where the attempt to save non-Aryans had the greatest chance of success. It was mentioned in regard to the plan to release Polish inmates of the Miranda del Ebro concentration camp in Spain, and as a country to which requests could be sent for material aid to populations of countries occupied by the Nazis.⁵⁶

It remains unclear how much influence the Vatican actually had on Argentina's decision-making. Documentation published to date by the Vatican on its relations with the Church in Argentina hides more than it discloses. It is still not possible to ascertain whether the Pope approached the government of Argentina on behalf of the non-Aryan refugees at all. Nor is it known if Cardinal Copello tried to influence the government to allow non-Aryan Catholics into the country, as Faulhaber had requested in March 1939 when they met at Rome. Whether Cardinal Copello met with Argentinean government officials, restricted his activities to Church circles, or perhaps did nothing at all, remains unknown. Following his return from Rome, Cardinal Copello published a pastoral letter providing an emotional account of the papal election, but other Argentinean Church documents that may shed light on the issue are not yet open to researchers.⁵⁷ From Vatican documents that have been made available, we know of one case in which the papal nuncio in Buenos Aires, Msgr. Fietta, approached his Berlin counterpart, C. Orsenigo, with a request for assistance in the release of a German-Jewish woman who

had been deported to the Warsaw ghetto. Orsenigo replied that such requests were invariably turned down.⁵⁸

The outcome of attempts at intervention always depended on the goodwill of the German authorities, but it appears that heavy pressure was never exerted, even in the case when the prominent German bishop Faulhaber asked Argentina's leading cardinal to do so.

THE INTERNAL CATHOLIC DEBATE ON NAZISM AND JEWS DURING THE WAR

The Christian Democrats against the Mainstream Catholics

As Argentina maintained political neutrality, the Catholic internal debate over the issues raised by the war intensified. Significant events—the German victories in Western and Eastern Europe, the entry of the United States into the war in December 1941, and the Rio de Janeiro conference of 1942—all served to spark heated discussion. The Catholic leadership attempted to distance themselves somewhat from the disputes, but did issue a number of official statements clarifying doctrinal matters for the benefit of Catholic lay organizations.

On January 11, 1942, the Argentinean See issued a declaration repeating previous statements of May 1936 and November 1938, stressing Catholic opposition to excessive nationalism, communism, totalitarianism, and racism, all of which had been condemned by the Vatican. This statement was interpreted in different ways by the various Catholic currents. *El Pueblo* claimed “it must not be understood from this that all Germany’s enemies are as white as snow, Freemasons, Communists, Atheists, Protestants, and persecutors of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁹ The newspaper contended that liberalism, communism, and Judaism were part of the same cultural world, so that antisemitism became an integral part of this world, too.

The Christian Democrats posed their fundamental question at the beginning of May 1942: did *El Pueblo* express the views of the heads of the Church, as it claimed, or was it just another newspaper, without direction from above and answerable to no one? The Church hierarchy should clarify the point at once, otherwise it would be an admission that the position adopted by *El Pueblo* really did reflect the opinions of the establishment, as the lower, uneducated classes believed.⁶⁰

The challenge went unanswered, and *El Pueblo* continued to be accepted by Catholic institutions throughout the country as the paper that reflected the stance of the Church establishment.

The Definition of Nazism as the Antithesis to Christianity

The Christian Democrats wanted to show that the Church had taken an unequivocal stand against Nazism, and thus, they hoped to influence Argentinean foreign policy, and in turn, internal affairs. Their publications drew on speeches and documents made by bishops worldwide and on official Vatican statements such as Pius XI's speeches of July 27, 1938 (to an audience of seminarians three months after Hitler's visit to Rome) and September 18, 1939 (to a delegation of French trade unionists).⁶¹ They quoted a senior Catholic figure in Poland who had said that "a victory of Hitler over Soviet Russia will bring about terrible oppression of all humanity, thus the Catholic world must support a Soviet victory over Hitler."⁶² One of their pamphlets quoted Catholic bishops of Holland, Belgium, and Poland, Other prominent personalities on whom they relied included Bishop P. M. Theas of Montauban, Archbishop P. M. Gerlier of Lyons, Archbishop J. G. Saliège of Toulouse, and Bishop Delay of Marseilles—all of whom opposed the deportations of Jews.⁶³ Latin American bishops were also cited, as was the Havana jurist Domingo Villamil, who had concluded that "there is a total antithesis between two opposed philosophies: the neo-pagan Nazi philosophy and Christianity." A statement by Archbishop R. Downey of Liverpool to an audience of Free French fighters on July 14, 1942, was printed; he had spoken about Nazi atrocities and prayed for a French victory.⁶⁴

Like the anti-Nazi underground in Europe, the Christian Democrats provided Catholics in Argentina with information on the activities of the French Christian underground movement in occupied France as described in their clandestine journal *Cahiers et courriers clandestins du témoignage chrétien*, which circulated in occupied and Vichy France from November 1941 onwards. The Christian Democrats also gave prominence to reports of cooperation between Catholics and Protestants in France.⁶⁵

One of the central issues in the internal Catholic debate was whether, in the struggle against Nazism it was permissible to enter into an alliance with the enemies of Christianity—communists and liberals—and in practical terms, to join the Allies. The Christian Democrats were outspokenly affirmative: Catholics must strive for the victory of Russia over Nazi Germany.

This position contradicted the approach of the mainstream Argentinean Church. Franceschi argued that there was no possibility of entering into partnership with “Satan,” and that the only way open to Christianity was to condemn the “errors” of both sides, without showing favoritism. In 1942, the Christian Democrat assault against *El Pueblo* grew fiercer, condemning the newspaper for its pro-Axis stand. This was a further move in the Christian Democrats’ struggle to secure for their journal, *Orden Cristiano*, recognition as a platform for Christian doctrine, which would serve to delegitimize *El Pueblo*.⁶⁶ *El Pueblo*, however, retained its status.⁶⁷

A Lone Voice of Dissent in the Spanish Church

Orden Cristiano reported on the only Spanish bishop who broke silence under the Franco regime and denounced National Socialism. In a pastoral letter, Bishop Fidel García Martínez of Calahorra stated that Spain had erred in replacing its earlier neutrality with “non-belligerency” since this was tantamount to support for the Axis. It was a serious error to identify Catholicism with Neo-Hispanism, since the term emphasized the pact between Spain and the National Socialists.

Martínez of course adhered to the Christian teaching that saw communism and National Socialism as modern philosophies that undermined the integrity of Christian dogma; but he asserted

the more immediate danger threatens from National Socialism. Thus opposition to the foreign and internal policies of Spain are not an expression of opposition to the position of the Church, but complete identification with the mystical body of Christ, the persecuted, tortured and violated body, by Nazi Germany.

This bishop stood in opposition to the rest of the Spanish Church, which supported the Blue Legion sent by the Fascists in Spain to fight against the Soviet Union on the German side. The Church, he added, ignored “the suffering brethren” in Germany, Belgium, and Poland. Above all, he warned of the danger threatening Christianity should it be swallowed up by the Nazi heresy. His was an exceptional voice in the Spanish Church, and exerted no influence on the positions taken by the Church in Spain.⁶⁸

A spirited debate ensued in the Argentinean Catholic press. Luis Alberto Terán charged that *El Pueblo* had congratulated General Franco on sending the Blue Brigade to fight alongside the Germans in the “holy war” against Soviet Russia, while at the same time preventing the publication of information about anti-Catholic persecution in Germany. Anyone who

supported sending the Blue Brigade to the Russian Front was ignoring the papal condemnation of National Socialism. Bishop Martínez's dissent from the monolithic support of the Spanish Church for the Franco regime provided an opportunity for the Christian Democrats to demand that Argentine Catholics desist from their massive support for the nationalists in Spain. Even if only a single Spanish bishop spoke out in dissent, it added legitimacy to Christian Democrat claims that their own minority view remained part of a Catholic outlook.⁶⁹

Alberto Duhau, editor of *Orden Cristiano*, accused the editor of *El Pueblo* of relaying false information emanating from the Nazi Transocean news agency, which was active in Argentina and was the primary source of news for the pro-Nazi paper *El Pampero*. Christian Democrats took a grave view of the fact that the Catholic paper, *El Pueblo*, continued to present the views of the Church establishment and to receive its support, and succeeded in expanding the scope and penetration of its ideas to a wide circle of the Catholic press, the Catholic Action organization, and the local parishes.⁷⁰

In the province of Córdoba, the Catholic newspaper, *Los Principios*, reprinted an article from *Sursum*, the organ of the youth section of Catholic Action, that echoed the political debate. The Christian Democrats claimed that *Los Principios* was "poisoning" Christian public opinion in Córdoba, and there, too, a debate arose around the question of which newspaper best presented the policy of the Vatican and true Catholicism. Duhau, who was accused of not receiving official Church legitimization for his journal because the biweekly *Orden Cristiano* printed in response a long list of bishops throughout Latin America who supported his views.⁷¹

The Christian Democrats were highly sympathetic to the Jews in their suffering. In November 1942, the Christian Democrats, seeking Church legitimization, again attacked *El Pueblo* after the inauguration of a new regular feature in that newspaper entitled "National and International Religious Information." According to *Orden Cristiano* the feature published items taken from Nazi news agencies in Argentina and not from Catholic sources. The editor of the Christian Democrat journal declared: "Nazism and hell are one and the same," and asked sarcastically if there was a single Nazi in Argentina who was not represented as a defender of the faith against its classic enemies, "heretics, Freemasons, Anglo-Yankees, and communist Jews."⁷²

The Christian Democrats were repeatedly forced onto the defensive in the face of attacks by mainstream Catholics, many of them Integral Catholics of

various hues. The support they received from the Catholic news agency Pro Deo, closely linked to British Catholicism, was of great significance for them.⁷³

The Jews in the Internal Catholic Debate

The Jewish issue was another matter for the internal Catholic debate. For the most part, attitudes to the Jewish question remained static, although the Salesians, for instance, began to show considerable sensitivity to the fate of the Jews of Europe. They spoke out in their defense especially from 1941 onwards, as antisemitic attacks and anti-Jewish vandalism in Argentina increased in intensity.⁷⁴

The matter of condemning antisemitism in general and Nazi antisemitism specifically also demonstrated the variety of reactions within the Catholic fold. The Christian Democrats' complete rejection of traditional antisemitism was not simply a function of the Catholic doctrine which had condemned Nazi racism but said nothing loudly and clearly against antisemitism as a whole. Unlike them, Franceschi's position was ambivalent: he opposed Nazism as an enemy of Christianity, yet his traditional antisemitic views hardened and included modern antisemitic stereotypes. For him, "antisemitism" referred only to physical violence against the Jews.

The ferocity of the internal Catholic debate as the war progressed, and the tendency of leading Catholics seeking to sever ties with organizations that supported the Allies in order to strengthen support for the government policy of neutrality, led to the public expression of accumulated anti-Jewish feeling. Delfina Bunge de Gálvez, a devout and active Catholic and the wife of the renowned author Manuel Gálvez, published her opinions in the widely respected intellectual Catholic weekly *Criteria*. She expressed traditional and modern antisemitic views typical of many Catholic intellectuals. No Catholic, she believed, could overlook the "Judaizing efforts" of the Jews, aimed at demoralizing Christian society, which had achieved notable success "thanks to their chief agent, a specific kind of motion picture, which has always been in Jewish hands." Furthermore, "neither side in the conflict should be preferred and war should not be declared on Nazi Germany. If we have been fated to die, we should die for the doctrine of Jesus Christ and his Church."⁷⁵ Although sympathetic to the Vichy regime, and hoping to see "traditional Catholic France victorious and flourishing in the future," Delfina Bunge de Gálvez admitted that the German invasion of France had effected no change in her fundamental position, and she did not think "that all the French were

angels and all the Germans the children of Satan.” There were places in Germany, like the village of Oberammergau, that seemed to her “like the heavens, or like the Garden of Eden before Original Sin.”⁷⁶

But the Christian Democrats stood their ground simultaneously on two fronts, the anti-Nazi front and defense of the Jews, without conceding their claim to recognition as “loyal and true Catholics” which they ceaselessly demanded from the Church hierarchy. They attacked the medley of notions typical of Nazi propaganda, as distributed in Argentina on the pages of the nationalist papers *El Pampero* and *Nueva Política*. They also rebuffed attempts to link as one the socialist, communist, and Jewish organizations, along with the Freemasons and the Christian Democrats’ own newspaper, *Orden Cristiano*. Pedro P. Baltramino declared:

We are not Communists, or Jews, or Freemasons. We are Catholics, loyally fulfilling all our obligations, knowledgeable about Christian dogma and Papal decrees. We also are experts at understanding the Nazi methods for distribution of their propaganda. This propaganda cunningly tries to isolate those Catholics who are fighting Nazism. We are not confused. Our struggle against Nazism is becoming more and more effective.

In mid-1941, in a series of radio broadcasts, Father Agustín Luchía Puig discussed “positive tolerance” in an analysis of the pope’s attitude to the war.⁷⁷ Puig also condemned antisemitism in his reply to a Mexican cleric who had sent greetings to *Orden Cristiano* on its appearance, but who had added that in Mexico “we are convinced that Judaism is the archenemy of Christianity.” Father Puig, however, held that “the archenemy of Christianity in our days is Nazism.... Moreover, the Jews are persecuted wherever they are, and it is doubtful whether they exert any influence in the West today.”⁷⁸

Support for the Christian Democrat position was found in the Brazilian Catholic journal *Por Christo*, whose editor wrote that the racist Catholic had no choice but “to kneel in the confessional and charge himself with racism, or to cease being a Catholic, and continue crucifying Jesus Christ.”⁷⁹

In 1942, Catholic clergy in Argentina who condemned antisemitism were few and far between. But *Orden Cristiano* insisted on trying to prove that whoever attacked the Jews was an enemy of Catholicism and of the Pope.⁸⁰ Condemnation of antisemitism was a political tool in the struggle to maintain the nature of Catholicism as the antithesis of Nazism. The journal frequently published speeches of Pius XI and documents of bishops who utterly rejected physical and spiritual attacks on the Jews, and underlined the damage that

antisemites wreaked on the world and their affront to the dignity of pope. In November 1942 the archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Hinsley, was again cited, from a speech which he declared that “the Catholic Church detests and condemns antisemitism.”⁸¹

In view of the sympathetic approach of the Christian Democrats, the hatred of the Jews displayed by nationalist Catholics was even more blatant.

Neutrality and Antisemitism

Catholics who supported neutrality looked on its opponents as traditional enemies of the Catholic Church—liberals, democrats, communists, Jews, and Nazis.⁸² In an ideology that regarded “Catholic” as a synonym for “patriot,” the Jew—by definition supporting and belonging to anti-patriotic forces—was counted politically and ideologically as among supporters of the Allies and enemies of Germany. To this negative image was added the economic “justification” of antisemitism: “As a result of the traditional division of Jewish capital and Jewish systems of credit, all the land, industry, commerce and transport of the Christians are moving into the hands of the Jews.”⁸³

Supporters of the Allies were called “collaborators.” The Casa del Pueblo (People’s House), headquarters of the Socialist party, was derisively pronounced “Casa Dil Poiblos,” to mock the accent of Jewish immigrants. The pro-Allied Acción Argentina was also viewed with contempt and scorn.⁸⁴ When the United States entered the war and attempted to mobilize the South American continent for support, anti-American and anti-British feelings grew. Franceschi wrote that while other nations had sold their souls to the Americans, “we have a spirit of Ibero-American honor and we resist those who try to harm this pride.”⁸⁵

In March 1942, Sáenz y Quesada, a nationalist activist, discerned a marked increase in antisemitism unrelated to the atmosphere following the Rio de Janeiro conference. In an article published in *Nueva Política*, he attempted to show that the Spanish roots of anti-Jewishness had preceded Nazi racism. True, the political, economic, and military successes of Germany encouraged the development of antisemitism, for these successes were said to be due to “the abolition of all Jewish influence in the state.” But in the writer’s opinion, “the expulsion of the Jews was the result of resurgent German nationalism and not the reason for it. Accordingly, in nations led by the Spanish race, there is an astounding parallel between the present-day anti-Jewish policy of the Reich and the situation obtaining at the height of Spanish power.”⁸⁶ In his opinion, when Spain intensified the Inquisition, it

also succeeded in completing the *Reconquista* in 1492—the year in which the Jews were expelled from Spain and the Americas were discovered. From that date Spain became a world power for a hundred and fifty years. It was simple to draw a parallel between the 15th-century Spanish Catholic monarchy and the 20th-century Germany of Hitler, not only in the broad historical processes that turned these two countries into strong and great empires, but also in the most minute details.⁸⁷ The writer concluded “that during the Monarchy no Jewish problem existed. Because the Inquisition and the expulsion were carried out without compromise, this problem was most efficiently solved.” Now a similar solution had to be found, based on the German example, which itself followed the Spanish precedent:

It is important that examples drawn from other countries that point the way to the solution to the Jewish problem should be given sufficient publicity. For this modern solution is similar to that of medieval Spain, which gave us our roots and our spirit, and its historical precedents are bound up in our unique national tradition.⁸⁸

This was by no means the official position of the Church, but its official spokesmen did demand that the country’s gates be closed to additional Jewish immigration. Catholic spokesmen warned of the danger from the illegal infiltration of Jews into the country—by then a burning issue—but at no time did they suggest the expulsion of Argentinean Jews as a solution. Traditional solutions to the Jewish problem should be based, they believed, on the writings of the Church Fathers and thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas. Sáenz y Quesada represented a new and exceptional voice among Argentinean Catholic journalists, although similar ideas had been conveyed earlier by the priest Leonardo Castellani in the 1930s.

The absence of any response by the Catholic leaders in Buenos Aires in this case stood in stark contrast to their reaction when the Christian Democrats deviated, in the opinion of the archbishop of Buenos Aires, from accepted positions.⁸⁹

To summarize, the internal Catholic debate, begun during the Spanish Civil War, intensified after the outbreak of the Second World War, followed by the Nazi invasion of Western Europe, and then of the USSR. In 1942, the debate became still more ferocious following the entry of the United States into the war, after which much pressure was brought to bear on Argentina to sever diplomatic relations with Nazi Germany in the wake of the Rio de Janeiro conference. The war and the different attitudes towards it became an integral part of the internal Catholic debate and of Argentinean public life.

Discussion centered on whether Argentina should continue the policy of neutrality or join the war on the Allied side. In fact, Argentina remained neutral until January 1944.

The discussion penetrated the organized Catholic frameworks and was widely reflected in various Catholic publications. Attitudes to the Jews were also influenced by these events, and these hardly changed even when information became available about their persecution and suffering at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators. Of the Catholic groups, only the Christian Democrats consistently voiced support for the Allies, and their struggle against antisemitism constituted an integral part of their greater struggle against Nazism.

The persecution of the Jews of Europe was never mentioned in official Church publications. But the official and semi-official Catholic press continued to portray negative antisemite stereotypes and to oppose further Jewish immigration into the country. These publications were indifferent to the distress and dire fate of the Jews in occupied Europe and displayed animosity towards the Jews of Argentina. Although the Argentinean Church hierarchy rejected Nazism and racism, it evinced no sign at the end of 1942 of Christian compassion for the Jewish victims of Nazism.

NOTES

1. See Chaim Shamir, *Beterem Shoah: The Persecution of the Jews of Germany and Public Opinion in Western Europe, 1933–1939* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 1974). On the United States: David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis* (New York and Toronto, 1968; rpt., New York and Toronto: Pantheon Books, 1985); Sander Diamond, “The Kristallnacht and the Reaction in America,” *Yivo Annual, Jewish Social Studies* 14 (1969). On the reaction of Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich, and in Argentina: *El Pueblo*, 16 Nov. 1938; on Cardinal Verdier of Paris, *El Pueblo*, 20 Nov. 1938; on Cosmo Gordon Lang, Abp. of Canterbury, *El Pueblo*, 13 Nov. 38.

2. *El Pueblo*, 18 Nov. 1938; also in *Noticias Gráficas*. The speakers stressed there was justification for “the unparalleled Nazi barbarism.” *Noticias Gráficas*, 7, 8, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, and 23 Nov. 1938.

3. Editorial in the socialist newspaper *La Vanguardia*, 11 Nov. 1938; *ibid.*, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 30 Nov. 1938.

4. On the meetings organized by the Socialists, Liberals and Communists, see Graciela Ben-Dror, “The Catholic Church in Argentina and the Jewish People during the Holocaust Era, 1933–1945” (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993). At a mass meeting held in the fairground, organized by the Argentine League for Citizen’s Rights, participants included workers’ organizations, Members of Congress, and representatives of the Evangelical Church, Douglas Bruce of the Scottish Church in Buenos Aires, V. Winborne, Dr. Eduardo Araújo, representing the Radical party, and Dr. Nicolás Repetto of the Socialist party. See *Noticias Gráficas*, 25 Nov. 1938; 2 Dec. 1938.

5. See *El Pueblo*, 13, 16, 20 Nov. 1938.

6. On the assassination, *Noticias Gráficas*, 7, 8 Nov. 1938; on the intention to react to German persecution, *Los Principios*, 9 Nov. 1938; on the conference of bishops held in the Archdiocesan Palace, “Conferencia del episcopado argentino,” *REABA* (Dec. 1938): 738; *ibid.* (March 1939): 150–54.

7. There is a clear attempt to portray Communism as a Jewish product: Virgilio Filippo, *Sistemas genialmente antisociales* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Tor, 1938). This was printed with the acquiescence of the Censor, Mariano Nuñez Mendoza, who was also responsible for the pamphlet *Catequesis*, and on the authority of the Vicar-General of the See of Buenos Aires, Msgr. Fortunato Devoto. Recommended by *REABA* (Dec. 1938): 789.

8. *Los Principios*, 11, 12 Nov. 1938.

9. *Los Principios*, 15, 18 Nov. 1938.

10. *El Pueblo*, 11, 12, 13, 16 Nov. 1938. *El Pueblo* published information on events in Germany at the same time as they were published in the United States, for example: *New York Times*, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20 Nov. 1938. In Palestine, for example: *Davar* (Hebrew), 9, 11, 15, 16, 21 Nov. 1938; *Hatzofeh* (Hebrew), 9, 11, 13, 17, 20 Nov. 1938. In Argentina, on the assassination of vom Rath and *Kristallnacht* in the Catholic press: *Los Principios*, 15, 16 Nov. 1938; *El Pueblo*, 15, 17 Nov. 1938.

11. See editorial in *El Pueblo*, 17 Nov. 1938. In the United States, the Catholic publications *Commonweal*, *Catholic Worker*, and *Colliers* called for the abolition of immigration quotas and a closed-door policy to refugees; see Wyman, *Paper Walls*, 74.

12. Compare “La bestia enfurecida,” *Criterio*, no. 559 (1938): 288, with *El Pueblo*, 17 Nov. 1938.

13. *Criteria*, no. 560 (1938): 315–16. This stand is close to the position taken by Catholic circles in the United States in Catholic Journals such as *America, Social Justice, Brooklyn Tablet*; see Wyman, *Paper Walls*, 73–74.

14. *Mundo Israelita*, 26 Nov. 1938.

15. “La opinión del arzobispo de París ha vuelto a levantarse contra el racismo,” *El Pueblo*, 20 Nov. 1938; see also Michael Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1981); Asher Cohen, ed., *History of the Holocaust, France* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), 26–38; Renée Poznanski, *Être Juif en France pendant la seconde guerre mondiale* (Paris: Hachette Livre, 1994).

16. *Mundo Israelita*, 22 Nov. 1938; *Noticias Gráficas*, 22 Nov. 1938.

17. Many liberal organizations held protest rallies. The Catholic newspaper *El Pueblo*, 19 Nov. 1938, on the other hand, conveys only the dry facts.

18. “Dos pesas, dos medidas,” *Criteria*, no. 560 (1938): 315.

19. Ibid. On Franceschi’s position, see “La crisis europea y la defensa argentina,” *Criteria*, no. 562 (1938): 367; Leonardo Senkman, “Argentina’s Immigration Policy During the Holocaust, 1938–1945,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 21 (1991): 155–88.

20. “Desde el primer paso,” *Criteria*, no. 563 (1938): 394. The debate with the Jewish weekly *Mundo Israelita* continued week after week. “Lo que faltaba,” *Criteria*, no. 564 (1938): 425–27.

21. “Orígen del antisemitismo,” *Criteria*, no. 568 (1938): 56–57. Regarding the debate in the Jewish press, see *Mundo Israelita*, 7 Jan. 1939.

22. Virgilio Filippo, *Los judíos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Tor, 1939); the promotion appeared in *Criteria*, no. 571 (1939): 124; Virgilio Filippo, *El Monstruo Comunista* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Tor, 1939). The hierarchy’s recommendation appeared in *REABA*, Aug. 1939.

23. On Heydrich’s order, see Yitzkak Arad and Abraham Margoliot, eds., *Documents on the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981), 173–78; on the Jews of Warsaw, Israel Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1982); on decrees affecting the Jews in occupied Poland, Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust, 1939–1945* (in Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1987), 1: 321–38.

24. “Hora de prueba,” *Criteria*, no. 625 (1940): 177; “La persecución anticristiana en Polonia,” *Criteria*, no. 626 (1940): 210–13; ibid., no. 627 (1940): 234–36; ibid., no. 628 (1940): 258–60; ibid., no. 629 (1940): 282–84; Juan Carlos Moreno, “El clamor del Papa,” ibid., no. 631 (1940): 323–25.

25. *Criterion*, no. 647 (1940). *Boletín ACA*, no. 219 (1 July 1940): 37–41; (8 Aug. 1940); (15 Aug. 1940); (19 Aug. 1940); (3 Oct. 1940); (21 Nov. 1940); (26 Dec. 1940).
26. “Un acto del Pontífice romano,” *Criterion*, no. 637 (1940): 53–56.
27. It is possible to follow the information reaching Argentina in the liberal *La Nación* or the socialist *La Vanguardia*, as well as *Mundo Israelita*. See, for example, *Mundo Israelita*, 27 Apr. 1940; 18, 27, and 30 May 1940; 8 June 1940, 6 July 1940.
28. “Jesús, el sabio,” *El Pueblo*, 22 June 1940; “Cultura y Religión,” *ibid.*, 23 June 1940; “La nueva patria de Einstein,” *ibid.*, 4 Oct. 1940; “Rumania, perseguirán a los judíos,” *ibid.*, 28 July 1940.
29. “Una revista y la masonería,” *El Pueblo*, 22–23 Apr. 1940. “Synagogue of Satan” appears in Rev. 3:9; the Freemasons were among the earliest social fraternities that admitted Jews to full membership.
30. “Un ejército de 100,000 sionistas,” *El Pueblo*, 13 June 1940; “Diarios italianos iniciaron una campaña por la reivindicación de Palestina,” *ibid.*, 26 July 1940. The “expulsion probably refers to the Arab revolt of 1936–1939 which attempted to throw the Jews out of Palestine, or possibly to the British White Paper that curtailed Jewish immigration.
31. “Polonia,” *Restauración Social*, no. 58 (Feb. 1940): 683–91; “Las deportaciones,” *ibid.*, no. 61, (May 1940): 60–61; “Polonia,” *ibid.*, no. 55 (Nov. 1939): 545–46; “Las emigraciones modernas,” *ibid.*, 547.
32. “Polonia,” 546.
33. “El gobierno polaco bajo los alemanes,” *Restauración Social*, 547.
34. “Las emigraciones modernas,” *Restauración Social*, 547.
35. “La Unión Soviética y la ciudad Vaticana,” *Restauración Social*, 579.
36. One may compare studies of the attitudes toward the Jews in the East and West: Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust*, 244ff.
37. “Comentan en Francia el nuevo estatuto anti-judío como una medida de defensa nacional,” *El Pueblo*, 22 Oct. 1940; “Pío XII y Francia,” *Restauración Social* (Aug. 1940): 260–62.
38. “En Francia dijo Baudin, no se amenazarán la vidas ni los bienes de los judíos,” *El Pueblo*, 23 Oct. 1940, 3; Arthur Cohen, “The Holocaust and Christian Theology. An Interpretation of the Problem” in *Judaism and Christianity under the Impact of National-Socialism* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1987), 473–79; Franklin H. Littell, “Christian Antisemitism and the Holocaust” in *ibid.*, 513–29; Marcel Dubois, “The Challenge of the Holocaust and the History of Salvation” in *ibid.*, 99–119; Richard I. Cohen,

“Jews and Christians in France during World War II: A Methodological Essay” in *ibid.*, 327–40; Michael R. Marrus, “French Churches and the Persecution of the Jews in France, 1940–1944” in *ibid.*, 305–26.

39. “Hacia la monarquía o hacia el totalitarismo,” *Restauración Social* (Sept. 1940): 262. For complimentary remarks on the Vichy regime, see “El nuevo sistema económico,” *ibid.*, 262–63.

40. Enrique Rau, *El racismo nacional-socialista y el cristianismo* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1939). Recommended by Catholic Action in Argentina were Julio Meinvielle, *La Iglesia católica y el Reich*; Gustavo Franceschi, *Totalitarismo, liberalismo, catolicismo* (Buenos Aires: n.p. 1939). See *Boletín ACA*, no. 217 (1941): 298. Also “Refutación del sexto principio nacional-socialista,” *El Pueblo*, 10 Sept. 1939, 13; the Encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* in the Spanish edition was “urgent” reading for all the faithful, for “they do not have the right to remain ignorant of the Church’s doctrine.” *Boletín ACA*, no. 219 (1940): 50–51. Nimio de Anquín, “Liberalismo suprepticio y libertad cristiana,” *Nueva Política* (Mar. 1941).

41. Jacques Maritain, “Sobre la guerra santa,” *Sur* (Aug. 1937); “Posiciones,” *Criterion*, no. 493, 12 Aug. 1937; 23 Sept. 1937; César E. Pico, “Carta a Jacques Maritain” in *Sobre la colaboración de los católicos con los movimientos de tipo fascista* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Adsum, 1937). On the debate between the liberal magazine *Sur* and the right-wing press see John King, *Sur. A Study of the Argentina Literary Journal and its Role in the Development of a Culture, 1931–1970* (London and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1986), 126–28.

42. Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); See also “Herencia y cristianismo,” *Criterion*, no. 685 (1941); and “Preservación de la raza y cristianismo,” *ibid.*, no. 689 (1941): 70; “La mística del neo-paganismo,” *ibid.*, no. 687 (1941): 21.

43. Jamming of Vatican Radio began at this time, probably in response to anti-racism broadcasts. See “Interferencias internacionales en radio Vaticana,” *Criterion*, no. 689 (1941): 70.

44. “El desarrollo de la vida religiosa en Alemania,” *Criterion*, no. 695 (1941): 214.

45. The issue had already arisen in December 1940: “Eutanasia,” *Criterion*, no. 668 (1940); it remained on the agenda: “Otra vez eutanasia,” *ibid.*, no. 717 (1941); 298.

46. “La eutanasia nos amenaza,” *El Pueblo*, 3 Oct. 1941; Bishop Conde von Galen of Münster, “Alemania, la verdadera situación,” *ibid.*, 5 Nov. 1941.

47. “Desmienten desde París que las fuerzas de ocupación hayan arrestado a sacerdotes,” *El Pueblo*, 8 Oct. 1941; “Carta de Berlín,” “Un testimonio inobjetable,” *ibid.*, 5 Nov. 1941.

48. “Sacerdotes en campos de concentración,” *Criterion*, no. 672 (1941): 70; “El desarrollo de la vida religiosa en Alemania,” *ibid.*, no. 685 (1941): 214; “Catolicismo alemán,” *ibid.*, no. 681 (1941): 285–96; “Los hechos desmienten al Dr. Krawek,” *ibid.*, no. 687 (1941): 20. *Criterion* simultaneously published items relating to the situation of the Church in Russia, *ibid.*, 19; “Los polacos deportados a Rusia,” “Robo en una Iglesia católica en Moscú,” “Radio Vaticana desmiente falsas noticias,” all *ibid.*, no. 687 (1941): 687. (Information dating from January 1941.) “Las asociaciones católicas en Holanda,” *ibid.*, no. 688 (1941): 46; “Las Escuelas católicas en Holanda,” *ibid.*, no. 690 (1941): 94.

49. Yaakov Turi, *From Forced Emigration to Deportation. The beginning of the Expulsion of the Jews beyond the Western and Southern borders of Germany as a Preparation for the Final Solution* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1987), 65–96, especially from p. 87; Helmut Krausnick, “Judenverfolgung,” in *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, edited by Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Helmut Krausnick, vol. 2 (Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau:, 1965), 342–43. In English: Helmut Krausnick and Martin Broszat, *Anatomy of the SS State*, trans. by Dorothy Long and Marian Jackson (London: Paladin, 1973).

50. Pierre Blet, Robert A. Graham, Angelo Martini, and Burkhardt Schneider, eds., *Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, vol. 6, Doc. 8 (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965–1981), 62–65 (henceforth ADSS).

51. On Brazilian visas, see John Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust 1939–1941* (New York: Ktav, 1979), 18–22; Avraham Milgram, *Os Judeus do Vaticano* (Rio de Janeiro: Imago, 1994); Leon Papeleux, “Le Vatican et le problème Juif (1939–1940),” *Revue D’Historie de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale* (Oct. 1975): 125.

52. ADSS, vol. 6. Doc. 8, 63–65.

53. Milgram, *Os Judeos*, 47 onwards.

54. Grosser, General secretary of the Raphaelsverein to the papal nuncio in Berlin, ADSS, Anexe II, Hamburg, 1 Sept. 1939, 133–34; *Restauración*

Social (Mar. 1940): 644–45. On repercussions within the Church, see Milgram, *Os Judeos*.

55. Innitzer to Pius XII, 28 Feb. 1941, *ADSS*, vol. 8, Doc. 33, 116–19; Msgr. Born A. Montini, 9 Sept. 1941, *ADSS*, vol. 8, Doc. 146, 271–73. Thus far, no evidence on the work of the Argentinean committee has been found, other than the reference to its establishment. The matter awaits further research.

56. *ADSS*, vol. 6, Doc. 88, 164; Doc. 89, 164; vol. 8, Doc. 455, 627–28.

57. “Carta Pastoral del Exmo. y Rmmo. Cardenal Santiago Luis Copello,” *Boletín ACA*, no. 193 (1939): 273–76. The subject of “non-Aryan Catholics” does not appear in official documents; see also Leonardo Senkman, “Argentina’s Immigration Policy,” 155–58.

58. Le Nonce a Berlin Orsenigo a Mgr. Montini, 12 Jan. 1943, *ADSS*, vol. 9, Doc. 11, 74–75; John Morley, *Vatican Policy*, 49–54.

59. *El Pueblo*, 11 Jan. 1942; *REABA* (Jan. 1942). “Sobre las directivas del episcopado,” *El Pueblo*, 14 Jan. 1942, 9; *Criteria*, no 724 (1942): 56; *Orden Cristiano* (15 Jan. 1942): 9.

60. Pedro Ma. Cazenave, “Cartas a la Dirección,” *Orden Cristiano* (1 May 1942): 12.

61. Obispo de Oruro, Ricardo “La declaración de episcopado argentino,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 Mar. 1942): 7; “Porqué no somos totalitaros?” *ibid.* (1 Feb. 1942): 12–13; *Restauración Social*, no. 78–79 (Oct.-Nov. 1941).

62. Msgr. Sigismundo Kaczynsky, “Rusia y Polonia,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 Mar. 1942): 10, 14.

63. Príncipe Humberto Zu Loewenstein, “La revolución cristiana en el mundo,” *Orden Cristiano* (May 1942): 3–4, 15.

64. Domingo Villamil, “La gran antítesis,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 Mar. 1942): 7–8, 14–15; on Downey see *Orden Cristiano* (1 Nov. 1942): 13.

65. “Cuadernos de testimonio cristiano,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 Oct. 1942): 10. Also see new edition of the booklet *Cahiers et couriers clandestins du Temoignage chrétien, 1941–1944*. Rpt., facsimile ed. (Paris 1980).

66. “L’Osservatore Romano, *El Pueblo* y la neutralidad católica,” *Orden Cristiano* (1 Apr. 1942): 14–15; “Catolicismo y ateísmo,” *Criteria*, no. 768 (1942): 273; “Igualdad,” *ibid.*, no. 754 (1942): 384; *ibid.*, no. 753 (1942): 361, 368; “Le voz del episcopado, El Cardenal Hinsley,” *Orden Cristiano* (5 Oct. 1942); *Orden Cristiano* (1 Nov. 1942): 13

67. Pedro M. Cazenave, “Cartas a la Dirección,” *Orden Cristiano* (1 May 1942): 12.

68. Luis Alberto Terán, “La pastoral del obispo de Calahorra sobre el peligro nazi,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 June 1942); for the complete pastoral letter see Fidel, Obispo, “Instrucción Pastoral sobre algunos errores modernos” (28 February 1942), *Boletín Eclesiástico Oficial del Arzobispado de Zaragoza*, no. 7 (1 Apr. 1942), 133–47.
69. *El Pueblo*, 31 May 1942; “*El Pueblo, La Vanguardia y Orden Cristiano*,” *Orden Cristiano* (1 May 1942): 12; “*El Pueblo... porqué será?*” *Orden Cristiano* (1 June 1942): 12–13.
70. Terán, “La pastoral del obispo de Calahorra,” 9. “*El Pueblo y El Pampero*,” *Orden Cristiano* (1 July 1942): 13; Alberto Duhau, “Rectificando a *El Pueblo*,” in “Noticias sobre EE.UU.,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 Feb. 1942): 14–15; “El ataque de *Sursum*,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 July 1942): 3–7.
71. “El ataque de *Sursum*,” 3–7, 9; “Repercusión del artículo de *Sursum* en Córdoba,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 July 1942): 7–8.
72. “Las noticias católicas de *El Pueblo*,” *Orden Cristiano* (1 Nov. 1942): 13.
73. “*El Pueblo* falsea un Auto arzobispal,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 July 1942): 8, published in *El Pueblo* on 4 June 1942. “Los Noticias Católicas de ‘*El Pueblo*,’” *Orden Cristiano* (1 Nov. 1942): 11; from “Noticias católicas Pro-Deo,” “Porqué el Papa no excomulga a Hitler?” *ibid.* (1 Nov. 1942): 11–12.
74. *Restauración Social*, no. 78–79, (Oct.–Nov. 1941).
75. Delfina Bunge de Gálvez, “Catolicismo de guerra,” *Criterio*, no. 764 (1942): 185–88
76. *Ibid.*
77. “‘*Criterio*’ y ‘*Nueva Política*,’” *Orden Cristiano* (1 May 1942): 10. *Criterio* had official recognition from the bishops, who recommended that Catholic Action members subscribe: *Boletín ACA*, no. 232 (1941): 103; Pedro F. Beltramino, “El confusionismo religiosos utilizado por la propaganda nazi,” *Orden Cristiano* (1 Jan. 1942): 11–12; Agustín Luchía Puig, “La buena tolerancia,” Radio Mitre de Buenos Aires, which broadcast weekly; *Orden Cristiano* (15 Sept. 1942): 6–7; *idem*, “El Papa y esta guerra,” *ibid.* (1 Nov. 1941): 6–7.
78. Agustín Luchía Puig, “El judaísmo, enemigo No. 1?,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 Mar. 1942): 8; see also *Orden Cristiano* (5 Oct. 1941): 3–5; (19 Oct. 1941): 3–5; (15 Nov. 1941): 5; (15 Dec. 1941): 9–10; (15 Feb. 1942): 9–11; (15 Mar. 1942): 8; (15 Nov. 1941): 11.
79. “Racismo—Antisemitismo,” *Orden Cristiano* (1 Oct. 1942): 12.

80. P. Antonio Van Rixtel, S.C.J, “La teoría de la raza, el antisemitismo y la Iglesia católica,” *Orden Cristiano* (1 Oct. 1942): 3–5, 13; (15 Oct. 1942): 7–9, 14–15.

81. A papal decree of March 25, 1928, condemned antisemitism; see *Orden Cristiano* (1 Nov. 1942): 5. On Hinley: “La Iglesia aborrece y condena el antisemitismo,” *Orden Cristiano* (15 Nov. 1942): 11.

82. “Razones en que se funda la neutralidad argentina,” *El Pueblo*, 21 Oct. 1943, 9.

83. For example, “El problema judío,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 90 (15 Apr. 1942): 7. “Los capitales de Morgan y Baring Brothers en la República Argentina,” *ibid.* (29 May 1942): 6.

84. “La neutralidad argentina,” *Nuevo Orden*, no. 96 (29 May 1942): 7.

85. Gustavo Franceschi, “Hispanismo,” *Criterio*, no. 845 (1944): 468.

86. Héctor Sáenz y Quesada, “Antiguedad del antijudaísmo en el Plata,” *Nueva Política* (Mar. 1942): 12–16.

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*

89. *Ibid.* On the acceptability of antisemitism in Catholic frameworks and education, see Gabriel Ruiz de los Llanos, *El Antisemita* (Buenos Aires: Editorial del Nuevo Amanecer, 1985), and *idem*, *La Mala Fe* (Buenos Aires: Editorial del Nuevo Amanecer, 1986). Gabriel Ruiz de los Llanos, interview by Graciela Ben-Dror, Buenos Aires, 2 Mar. 1986. The author confirmed that there was no hint of an official reaction either in *REABA* or *El Pueblo* and *Criterio*.

CHAPTER 9

The Reaction of Argentine Catholics to the Mass Murder of European Jews, 1942–1943

The reports on the mass systematic murder of European Jews—widely publicized in Britain and the United States from the summer of 1942 onward, with peak coverage in November and December of that year—also reached Argentina. The liberal press published an account of the Day of Mourning declared by the Argentinean Jewish community on December 2, on which Jewish merchants closed their businesses to express solidarity with the victims. Reports about the extermination, however, were not featured in headline articles in either conservative, liberal, or socialist newspapers.¹

Additional information about the destruction of European Jewry reached the public through the Catholic press, and reflected deep divisions among Catholics in Argentina during the war. Three main groups figured prominently in these debates: the Church establishment, the Christian Democrats, and the nationalists.

THE CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT

As noted earlier, the most influential organs of the Argentinean Church establishment which reflected its official positions included the daily *El Pueblo*, whose editor was José L. Sanguinetti, and the weekly *Criteria*, edited by Gustavo Franceschi. The weekly enjoyed not only the imprimatur of the Argentinean episcopate but also the blessing of the pope himself. In addition, most provinces published their own papers, among them the influential *Los Principios* in Córdoba.

The Catholic press did quote the pope's speech of December 8, 1942, broadcast throughout the world on Vatican radio, in which he expressed concern about the "victims and material losses" caused by the ongoing confrontations.² Although Jewish victims were not mentioned explicitly, it was clear that the Vatican accepted the reports of Nazi atrocities as reliable.³ Even so, the response of the Church throughout the war was "cautious" and

the Vatican refrained from taking sides, a policy that was guided by both diplomatic and political considerations.⁴

The destruction of the Jews in Europe prompted a variety of responses in Catholic establishment circles in Argentina. Luis Barrantes Molina, a lay columnist for *El Pueblo* who was also involved in Catholic Action, expressed his opposition to the persecution of Jews, yet did not differentiate between the persecution of Jews up to that point, and the reported mass killings. The negative stereotypes of “Jewish economic power” and “Jewish solidarity” were the starting point of his analysis:

It has been possible to apprise the economic and mercantile power of the Jews living in this capital, as well as the spirit of solidarity and social freedom granted to them by our laws. Countless workshops and businesses were closed as a result of antisemitic persecutions going on in Europe through the inspiration of National Socialism.⁵

Furthermore, he wrote that “the Jews did not find it proper to identify their interests totally with those of the country in which they live and prosper.”⁶

Just as the Jews in Germany were being charged with all possible offences, Barrantes Molina’s accusation about the lack of Jewish identification with the country was designed to draw attention to the same accusations raised incessantly by antisemitic circles, including Catholics, in Argentina itself.⁷ In addition, Molina charged the Jews with “immoral business practices.”⁸

El Pueblo’s commentator in fact compiled a long list of accusations that had been made against the Jews in Germany. They were grounded in a host of political, economic, and moral justifications: “Demoralization and corruption of countries, pornography, ownership of businesses that promote addiction and scandals.” The list is designed to further the reader’s identification with the accusers, while the persecution of the Jews is depicted as a trifle, acquitting the Germans of blame: “The German government, like every other government, is entitled to activate means of hygiene and social protection to the extent they are needed [to establish] peace, order and general well-being.” At the same time, Barrantes Molina comes out against generalized accusations, arguing that “every person must be judged [individually] in order to avoid punishing the innocent.”⁹

Barrantes Molina and *El Pueblo* were committed to the traditional Catholic view of the Jews:

The Catholics cannot be interested in destroying [the Jews], because inadvertently they [the Jews] render an important service to the Church and Christianity, as a living testimony to the miraculous truth of Biblical prophecy. Their path proves the divinity of Jesus Christ.¹⁰

Persecution of the Jews was viewed as a divine punishment: “Everything that was foreseen by Jesus Christ and the prophets thousands of years ago, as proven in the Bible, is coming true or is being realized in these very days.”¹¹

This theological interpretation was highly unusual in that it was not voiced within any other official Catholic framework. However, as a faithful member of the church establishment, subject to the Vatican’s authority, Molina concluded his article by expressing his commitment to the papal anti-racist injunctions: “The scale of the suffering inflicted on the Jews by the National Socialist government, or as a result of the disastrous consequences of the racist doctrine, remains intolerable.”¹²

We must bear in mind that the modern antisemitism that characterized Argentinean Church circles portrayed the Jew as responsible for two ideologies regarded as the “mistakes” of the modern era, namely liberalism and Marxism, even though this accusation did not figure explicitly in the papal encyclicals.¹³

Argentinean Catholicism regarded papal pronouncements as objectivity incarnate: “The Vatican does not act in favor of any policy of the Axis powers, or in favor of any policy of the enemies of the Axis.”¹⁴ Furthermore, the Holy See was regarded—its objectivity notwithstanding—as reserving for itself the right “to call injustice and violence by their name,” if not *urbi et orbi*, then undoubtedly in recommendations and messages delivered to the governments involved.¹⁵

At the same time, however, it appeared that “the Pope considers Communism the principal danger,” though not the only one, particularly in Europe. “Pius XII is well aware of this,” added the commentator in *El Pueblo*. The pope also took notice, he asserted, of “the obstacle that is being brutally placed on the road to negotiations to achieve peace.”¹⁶ But the identity of this “obstacle”—probably Nazism—had to be guessed by the reader. By contrast, the account of the intercession of the Holy See with the government of Slovakia on behalf of the Jews was emphasized: “It is believed that personal intervention there by the Pope helped to halt the transports.”¹⁷

In contrast to the hostility toward the Jews exhibited by the Catholic paper in Buenos Aires, the local Church’s mouthpiece in the city of Córdoba

emerges as much more matter of fact. The paper even responded with sympathy and understanding to the plight of the persecuted Jews in December 1942. The front page of the December 9, 1942 issue carried a report that, following the appeal of prominent Jewish figures to President Roosevelt to make his influence felt on the Jewish question, he warned that after the war courts of justice would be set up to try the Nazis for the crimes they had committed.¹⁸ The paper also reported that “many trade unions in the capital and throughout the country joined the 15-minute strike declared by the Confederation of Workers of Latin America in order to show their outrage at the persecution of the Jews in Europe.”¹⁹

The Absence of Reaction by the Episcopate

On December 15, 1942, the Argentinean episcopate issued a pastoral letter to the faithful. The general public had been affected by news of the Axis defeat in North Africa, the repulsing of the Axis offensive on the Soviet front, and the victories of the Red Army, as well as ongoing reports about the mass murder of the Jews that had already led to a public response in the country.²⁰ Against this background the Argentinean episcopate again drove home the Church’s conventional wisdom, as already pronounced in 1936, 1938, and early 1942:

We denounce liberalism, which has led nations to disintegration and anarchy as a result of the excess in granting freedom under its aegis. We denounce socialism and communism, which are the negation of every Christian dogma and morality. We denounce totalitarianism in all its forms, because it poses a danger to human dignity by taking away from man the principal value of freedom. [We also denounce] materialist racism, which is the negation of all spiritual order.²¹

How are we to understand the Argentinean episcopate’s reluctance to utter the words “National Socialism” and its opting for the notion of “materialist racism”? It would seem that the denunciation applies to the political doctrine rather than to the Nazi German regime and state. Besides reflecting the position of Pius XII, this statement also conveys the episcopate’s identification with and support for the neutral policy of the Argentinean government during the incumbency of Dr. Castillo.²²

The Argentinean episcopate did not refer at all in its official documents to reports of the extermination of the Jewish people by the Nazis in Europe. We do find a direct reference to “peace in the world” in a document by the Archbishop Copello of Buenos Aires published in April 1943, but its

appearance was prompted by the Pope's appeal to the Catholic clergy throughout the world to entreat and recite special prayers for peace among the nations. Although pastoral letters were designed primarily as internal counsel for the Catholic world, it must be asked if the absence of any reference by the Argentinean episcopate to European Jewish deaths, or of any sign of solidarity with local Jewish grief, indicates that it had embraced the trend evinced earlier in *El Pueblo*, of the legitimization of Germany as equal to the other countries involved in the European conflict.²³

For the Catholic establishment, "all stand accused: liberalism, socialism, totalitarianism and racism." Consequently, "there is no other way" except that of Jesus Christ, which is "the absolute, existential and enduring truth apart from which there is no other truth."²⁴

This view of Catholicism as a dimension of integral ideology made it an alternative in competition with other worldviews; the Jewish question was inseparable from this integral outlook. We cannot rule out that some sections of the episcopate shared the antisemitic attitudes that prevailed among prominent clergymen. This would be difficult to establish, however, in light of the absence of any reference to the Jewish question at the higher levels of Church leadership. At the time, antisemitic statements by Catholic activists within the Church apparatus who were not clergymen were in abundance, particularly from the members of two main Catholic organizations: Catholic Action, and *Cursos de Cultura Católica*. In this context the silence of the episcopate on the Jewish issue, even after the publication of reports on the extermination, assumes particular significance.²⁵

The pastoral letter of December 15 received a wide response in the local non-Catholic press, whether conservative, liberal, or socialist. The liberal papers *El Mundo* and *Crítica* agreed that "The Argentinean Church has spoken out against totalitarianism and for democracy," but the editors of *El Pueblo* asserted that *El Mundo* had read into the pastoral letter things that were not in it at all.²⁶ *El Pueblo* did express solidarity with the Pope's call for a just world order in the 1942 Christmas address. Pius XII had underscored the need to show respect for human life, a respect that emanated from the physical existence, development, and integrity of the human personality. Those who denied this belief, the pope claimed, were taking the wrong path.²⁷ Yet *El Pueblo*'s editorials and commentaries constantly insisted that it was "the excessive freedom" of liberalism that brought about socialism, communism, and totalitarianism. Consequently, "there is no room for all the

irritating attempts to legitimize some form of coexistence between the materialist liberalism and the Christian integral view of society.”²⁸

As the paper’s editor was firmly in favor of Argentinean neutrality, and as he particularly feared American pressure—which mounted after the Rio de Janeiro conference in January 1942 and might eventually prove effective—he used the papal message as a pretext to place communism and Nazism on the same plane, while presenting both as the product of liberalism.²⁹ Only the racist doctrine was condemned, not the German political system.³⁰ *El Pueblo*’s comparison of Nazism, communism, and liberalism became the basis of the writer’s conclusion that his country must not enter into an alliance with any country representing one of those ideologies. He argued that for ideological-political reasons Argentina must not side with the Allies in their confrontation with the Axis powers; conveniently glossing over the economic and pragmatic considerations that stood behind Argentina’s neutrality.

CONFIRMATIONS OF MASS MURDER AND RENEWED HOSTILITY

Meanwhile, declarations made simultaneously in Washington, London, and Moscow on December 17, 1942, confirmed the reports of mass murders of European Jews. The next day, *Los Principios* in Córdoba printed the story on its front page under the headline “Concern over the Persecution of the Jews.” The paper published the statement by British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden on information that had reached Britain on “Hitler’s intentions to exterminate the Jews of Europe.” The story was brief, with no attempt at denial; on the contrary, it stressed its concern over the persecution, and the protest that followed.³¹ *El Pueblo*, too, quoted the declaration of December 17—albeit on page 3—but without comment.³²

Several days later, *El Pueblo*’s senior staff chose to ignore the issue of the persecution of the Jews. If on December 8, it had referred to the unjust persecution of the Jews; on December 25, the editor made an ingenious attempt to disprove the more ominous reports of mass murder. The author of an article entitled “Letter from Paris” claimed that

the news about extermination in Poland is without foundation. It should be taken into account that several thousand Jews are currently working in the German war industry, and it must be realized that systematic extermination of racial elements is now not in the Reich’s interest.³³

Henri Guele, the journalist quoted in the article as the source of the information, added that “this campaign is designed to increase the volume of sales by Jewish businesses in London and New York.”³⁴

With this, the Catholic newspaper cast doubt on the credibility of the reports, which it saw as inconvenient from the point of view of Catholic teaching, while still showing some willingness to accept the truth of reports of other measures being perpetrated against the Jews that were more in accord with it. Glossing over the violence and murder, while denouncing the concept of equal rights that had facilitated the social and economic integration of Jews, was in accordance with both the Christian traditional approach to the Jewish question and the anti-liberal, antisemitic outlook prevalent in Catholic circles in Europe and Argentina. Furthermore, the Jews “as killers of Jesus Christ” continued to be identified with liberals, communists, and Nazis—all of them members of the “Godless gang” and enemies of Christianity.³⁵

It comes as no surprise that those who believed the Nazi propaganda easily scorned those Catholic intellectuals who condemned Nazi Germany. Forty-three Catholic intellectuals from Europe who lived in the United States published a statement declaring themselves anti-Nazis and opposed to Nazi crimes. Barrantes Molina mocked this group and wrote:

The current problem represents the climax of the development that began three centuries ago with Luther’s heresy, continued through Liberalism, which led to the unlimited power of the state, and from there spread to Socialism, Neo-Paganism, or racial despotism, to the Soviet empire or Communist tyranny, with all the accompanying social aberrations and regressions.³⁶

Nazi Germany, the instigator and perpetrator of the crimes that had now gained wide publicity, was not mentioned by name.

El Pueblo, however, was not the sole voice on this issue. In early January 1943, a letter of reply from Archbishop Audino Rodríguez y Olmos of San Juan de Cuyo to Dr. Matteo Goldstein of the Jewish community was published in *Los Principios*. In the letter, the archbishop emphasized “human brotherhood” based on the common origin of all nations and races as created by one God; he prayed to God, he wrote, that the persecutions of the people of Israel would stop and people of all races would embrace one another as brothers.³⁷ It appears that Archbishop Rodríguez y Olmos was the only Church leader in Argentina who addressed himself to the ongoing extermination of the Jews at the time. *Los Principios* also reprinted a 1938

article by Jacques Maritain, entitled “Why We Are neither Racists nor Antisemites.”³⁸

The freedom of expression permitted by the Church establishment vis-à-vis the Jewish issue manifested itself in the ability of editors of traditional Catholic newspapers to respond, sympathetically or with hostility, to the news of the destruction of the Jewish people in Europe. The freedom on this issue that was enjoyed by influential Catholic newspaper editors manifested itself fully in the contrast between the main Catholic newspapers of Buenos Aires and their counterparts in Córdoba. The diversity of attitudes held by clergy, intellectuals, and the Catholic press in representing the Church leadership indicates that no single, imposed policy existed, instead there was room for personal initiative on the Jewish issue despite the overall centralist policy of the Church authorities.

THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS

The debate between the Christian Democrats and the mainstream Church establishment in the columns of *Orden Cristiano* intensified during the war as the Nazi crimes came to light. Editor Alberto Duhau and his contributors were Catholic intellectuals who openly sided with the Allies, focusing their efforts on uncovering Nazi crimes, and attacking Argentinean Catholics who supported antisemitism and an Axis victory. Duhau was incensed by *El Pueblo*’s articles, particularly those of Barrantes Molina, with its defense of Germany’s right to pursue a policy of “hygiene and social protection.” As for accusations leveled against Jews for “moral offenses,” Duhau asked whether Barrantes Molina remembered “that Catholic clergymen, too, were accused of horrendous moral offenses and were persecuted as a result in the Reich.” “Should we think,” he continued, “that measures of ‘hygiene and social protection’ are to be employed against them, too?”³⁹

Manifestations of solidarity with the Jews mostly came from priests and Catholic laymen who had already taken an unambiguous stance against Nazi Germany. Consequently, in view of *El Pueblo*’s reserve toward the declaration of the U.S. Catholic intellectuals, a writer in *Orden Cristiano* argued that *El Pueblo* was not interested in the Catholic message of the document but rather in its political implications. He also pointed out that the signatories to the declaration included thirteen priests, most of them professors in Catholic universities, a fact that *El Pueblo* had endeavored to conceal from its readers.⁴⁰

The debate grew strident when it emerged that *Orden Cristiano*'s attack intended to show that *El Pueblo* was not adhering to the official line of the Catholic hierarchy; the article in question was, in fact, entitled "El Pueblo Against Catholics and the Heads of the Church."⁴¹ This campaign, aimed at undermining the Catholic legitimacy of a newspaper known as "Catholic," gained momentum throughout 1943. It reached its peak with the discovery and publication of a document that reached the Advisory Emergency Committee for the Political Defense of the Continent, which had been established at the Rio de Janeiro Conference and was headquartered in Montevideo. According to the document, dated June 1941, the aim of the Berlin-based Instituto Ibero-American was to bring about the "Nazification" of South America. Reprinted in the Commission's report, the document included a list of "recommended" newspapers which published and engaged in National Socialist propaganda, including *El Pampero*, *El Pueblo*, *Bandera Argentina*, *Diario Español*, *Oiga*, *Crisol*, and *Deutsche La Plata Zeitung*.⁴²

The institute's grouping of the Catholic *El Pueblo* together with known pro-Nazi organs in Argentina such as *El Pampero* and *Bandera Argentina* (which received financial support from the local German embassy) was evidence that it was considered sympathetic to Germany.⁴³ No evidence was offered on the nature of the newspaper's ties with the German embassy in Argentina. Dr. Manuel Ordoñez, a leading Catholic activist in the Christian Democrat camp, confirmed that *El Pueblo* received newsprint from the German embassy.⁴⁴

From the outset of its publication, *Orden Cristiano* had denounced *El Pueblo*'s pro-Nazi bias while openly expressing solidarity with Jewish suffering. With reports in the world press about Nazi crimes and the systematic murder of Europe's Jews, the newspaper quoted the pastoral letter of the French cardinals and bishops that had been submitted to Marshal Pétain following the mass arrests and deportation of Jews in their country.⁴⁵ In general, the paper went to great lengths to publish every anti-Nazi statement emanating from Catholic clergy throughout the world. It also launched a frontal attack against antisemitism, which it denounced in no uncertain terms. *Orden Cristiano* sought to arouse Catholic public opinion in Argentina by providing Catholic views that differed from those emanating from the intellectual elite of the ecclesiastical mainstream in the country.

The Jewish issue was constantly on the agenda of the Christian Democrats. They regarded their campaign against antisemitism as part of their struggle against Nazi sympathizers in Catholic circles throughout the

country. According to one Christian Democrat activist, Cornelia Groussac, Christianity, by its nature, grants freedom of conscience, which constitutes the foundation of civic tolerance in the religious sphere. It follows, therefore, that “nothing is as un-Christian than antisemitism.” Groussac went on:

The unprecedeted persecution of the Jewish people constitutes one of the most frightful crimes that ever tainted humankind. Not putting up resistance with every means at our disposal to this brutal assault on human justice and dignity amounts to declaring ourselves accomplices to the crime, this barbarian attack against civilization and grace of brotherhood.⁴⁶

Groussac considered the persecution of the Jews to be perhaps the most serious of the mistakes of the totalitarian Nazi system, for the pope had declared that “the source and purpose of social life is to preserve the development and integrity of human beings.”⁴⁷

Another issue in the sharp debate between *Orden Cristiano* and the spokesmen for mainstream Catholicism was the treatment of the Church by the Third Reich. Drawing on Catholic Press Agency releases of February 21 and 28, 1943, *Orden Cristiano* presented evidence of persecution and the closure of Catholic institutions by the Nazis, along with attacks on property and persons, and the arrest by the Gestapo of twenty clergymen of the Breslau diocese—in contrast to the news published by *El Pueblo*. These revelations were augmented by information found in *El Cristianismo en el Tercer Reich* (Christianity in the Third Reich), in which German Catholic leaders sought to inform their co-religionists throughout the world of the true condition of the Church in Germany. The book included the texts of documents gathered by the clergy that portrayed the situation of the Church before the outbreak of the war.⁴⁸ The Christian Democrats accused *El Pueblo* of attempting “through numerous articles to conceal and even deny the reports of true Catholicism.”⁴⁹

Father S. Schrijvers went even further in attacking *El Pueblo*, which, he asserted, “is mistakenly regarded as the voice of the Church.” In an article entitled “Antisemitism,” he described Barrantes Molina’s piece on the Jewish question as malevolent and deliberately confusing, since it implied that totalitarian countries were not acting arbitrarily “when they seize Jewish property and when their men beat up and persecute the Jews in a manner worse than the treatment of beasts of burden.”⁵⁰ The writer returned to the sources of Christian doctrine because, he said, very few issues were the subject of so many unjust allusions, “so many vague claims, so many cheap

statements as in the case of the Semitic question.”⁵¹ Schrijvers considered the persecution of the Jews as part of a more comprehensive plan. The Nazi war, he argued, is directed against the modern world: “For them to destroy Judaism means the destruction of the spirit of European civilization and its moral foundation.”⁵² He denounced anti-Jewish stereotypes as baseless. “No argument can be found which would justify the brutality mounted against the Jews.” Speaking for himself and in the name of the Comité Pro-Defensa del Cristianismo (an organization established at the initiative of the Christian Democrats), he declared that:

For the Catholic Church there is neither murdering race, nor accused Jewish race. We are all brothers, and we must love everyone like ourselves for the sake of God. It would be difficult to pray devotedly to Jesus Christ who was a Jew, to Mary who was a Jewess, to the first pope, Saint Peter, and to the great apostle to the gentiles, Saint Paul, and to other apostles, while rejecting or hating the Jew as such.⁵³

In opposing antisemitism, the priest cited the words of Pope Pius XI, who had denounced Jew-hatred as contradictory to Christianity.⁵⁴ The Christian Democrats found it necessary to draw attention to the pronouncements of the Church leadership abroad, both in Rome and in the occupied countries, which “without an exception take the stance of total condemnation of the evil, and support of their Jewish brethren.”⁵⁵ In reality, unfortunately, such condemnation was less outspoken and complete than they suggested.

One of their sources of inspiration was Patriarch Ardia of Antioch, who was quoted in *Orden Cristiano*:

It is said I am patriarch of the Jews. Well, I am with them, and I defend them. The Jews are not only our forefathers, but our brothers as well. Our Father is their Father. We are proud to be of the same stock, and with all our heart we pray that the good Lord shall free the oppressed Jews from the persecution they are victims of, in Palestine and in the entire world.⁵⁶

Another inspiring figure was Cardinal Arthur Hinsley of England, who in a speech of December 31, 1942, said: “It is impossible to be neutral in a conflict of this kind.” Paraphrasing Jesus’ words, he added, “He who is not with me is against me.”⁵⁷

Archbishop José María Caro of Santiago de Chile was another important figure among Latin American Catholic leaders whom they cited—offering a stark contrast to the silence of the Argentinean clergy. In a letter of December

2, 1942 to Dr. Abraham Drapkin, the president of the Zionist Federation, Archbishop Caro wrote:

On the day observed by the Jewish community as the day of prayer and mourning for the numerous victims who perished as a result of the persecutions that the Jewish people are suffering, the Archbishop wishes to inform you that he participates in the mourning shared by everyone possessed of human feelings, particularly the Christians. For God there is no Jew or gentile, we are all children of the same Father in heaven. His Excellency adds his prayer so that it might reach God who will establish peace and brotherhood among men, and this is the main aspiration that Jesus Christ wanted to bring to earth.⁵⁸

Orden Cristiano reprinted an editorial, “Extermination of the Jews,” from the Guatemalan Catholic paper, *Verbum*. Editor Duhau declared that this piece “demonstrates the universal unity of thought and action of Catholics in the face of the criminal extermination of the Jewish residents of Europe.”⁵⁹

Another Christian Democrat, Father Bernardino de Echeverría, was concerned that in Argentina many Catholics wished

for the victory of the Axis powers, a desire that they do not even attempt to hide or disguise. They see the defeat of the Allies as the beginning of a new era in the world in which the ‘new order’ will be established.⁶⁰

Despite this, “there are still significant numbers of Catholics who are not afraid of a victory of the U.S. and Britain. On the contrary! They regard such a victory as offering a chance to improve the world order after the war.”⁶¹ Such Catholics as these saw the Allies as supporting the fundamental principles of civilization that was rooted in Christian teaching. De Echeverría considered hypocritical the excuse of Catholics who sided with Germany that Nazism served as a barrier against the advance of communism.

Another Buenos Aires priest, Luis Brasesco, published a poem entitled “Salmo Doliente para Israel” (A psalm of grief for Israel), lamenting the extermination of the Jewish people and praying that God save them from the Nazis, “the hungry, rabid dogs.”⁶²

Christian Democrats took a very grim view of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, and the terrible crimes committed against the Russian people despite the protection supposedly afforded by the Soviet-German non-aggression pact. What position should Catholics take on this issue? The Christian Democrats looked to the statements of Pope Pius XII

and his defense of Cardinal Hinsley, who had been accused of supporting Soviet communism. Vatican radio had described this as absurd, stressing that “all [Hinsley’s] prayers were devoted to the Russian nation and people, without offering support to Bolshevism.”⁶³

As we have seen, the Christian Democrats were in agreement with the declaration of the 43 European Catholics then living in the United States, and saw the statement as another opportunity to reject antisemitism:

Nothing could be less Christian than antisemitism. The frightful persecution currently suffered by the Jewish people is one of the most grievous crimes that ever tainted humankind. Succumbing to this violence against justice and human dignity and not resisting it with all the means at our disposal is in a way tantamount to cooperating with this barbarian assault against civilization and brotherhood.⁶⁴

In contrast to the indifference of the Catholic establishment, Christian Democrats continued to denounce these atrocities throughout 1942. It was at precisely that time that Church leaders in Argentina repeatedly stressed that “the Vatican sides neither with the Axis policy nor the policy of the enemies of the Axis.”⁶⁵

THE CATHOLIC NATIONALISTS

The Argentinean nationalist movement drew its inspiration from the Catholic Right in Franco’s Spain and the European philo-fascist Right. It comprised a broad range of factions that failed to coalesce under a single leadership, and showed a hostility to Jews that sometimes verged on unbridled hatred.

Opposition to the Entry of Jewish Refugee Children

On November 20, 1942, presidential decree no. 136320, issued by President Castillo, allowed the entry into Argentina of a thousand Jewish children from Europe as a humanitarian gesture. Representatives from various nationalist factions immediately lashed out against the decision. The editors of the weekly *La Voz del Plata* made mocking reference to the sparsely populated country to be filled by Jews: “Nothing to Worry About, the Jews are Coming.”⁶⁶ The daily *El Pampero*, edited by Enrique Osés, responded with:

Within 25 years, the grown up, sated, and well-educated Hebrew children will be in the midst of Buenos Aires society, in other words, those belonging to Jewish society will oust the last Argentinean officials from public positions, and will even bring about the removal

from the Constitution of the clause stipulating that the president of the country must be a Catholic.⁶⁷

F. García Della Costa, who was on the staff of *Crisol* (also edited by Osés), wrote that the Jewish children would turn into “a thousand grown-up Jews who will rule over our children.” Consequently, “we don’t want them, they bring harm and we oppose their coming [here].” Besides the fact that the children’s plight did not evoke any compassion with him, their situation was compared to that of the thousand sailors of the German warship *Graf Spee* sunk in the La Plata river estuary late in 1939, and who had been allowed to enter Argentina subject to restrictions and supervision. However, “while German sailors are harmless because they might marry Argentinean women” and “serve our country after the war ends,”

the Jewish children will marry Jewish women and [in this fashion] are liable to give us 10,000 Jewish children for the sake of the next generation....They will be very strong, stronger than our children, who will be able to inherit only our pain and plight.⁶⁸

Beyond blaming the government; he set forth a plan to deport the children in the near future. In his view this would involve considerable expense because “the thousand children [will have to be] returned, possibly when they reach adolescence, if their numbers are not reduced by then.” This passage may be alluding either to the possible deportation or the liquidation of some of the children in the future. In any event, García Della Costa did not mince words: “The stay of a thousand little Jews in Argentina will be provisional. All those who defend them today may rest assured of that.”⁶⁹ Furthermore, he claimed “in the name of the motherland” that the entry of the Jewish children “will be considered temporary and conditional on the reversibility of the situation in the short range. Argentinean children need help, and therefore the cry, heard for the last five years in the country, is ‘Argentineans—yes! Jews—no!’”⁷⁰

Bandera Argentina, edited by Juan Carulla, and as nationalist, antisemitic, and pro-Nazi as *Crisol*, referred mockingly to “the miserable Jewish children.”⁷¹

In contrast, *El Pueblo* approached the issue of the Jewish children in a thoroughly businesslike fashion, with no hint of rejection or mockery. Unlike the liberal or communist press, *El Pueblo* expressed neither sorrow over the fate of the Jewish children, nor support for the government’s decision to

allow them to enter the country. It did provide a current and matter of fact report about the young refugees.⁷²

Ultimately, the thousand children from concentration camps in Europe who were granted entry permits by the Argentinean government did not arrive at the Buenos Aires port. The reasons had to do with foot dragging by the Argentinean consuls in Europe, and obstacles that had been posed by the war.⁷³

The Jews as Humanity's Prime Enemy

For the Catholic nationalist Right in Argentina, patriotism entailed hostility to the Allies, sympathy toward the Axis powers, neutrality, and upholding Catholicism as a cultural and anti-liberal worldview. These sentiments were coupled with an open hatred of Jews. that attempted to influence and shape public opinion. As a powerfully influential body, this section of the Argentinean Right began to flourish from 1938 and by late 1942 had gathered considerable strength and momentum. Cultural and political conflicts, whose depth is revealed at times of crisis, in conjunction with the blunt expression of anti-Jewish sentiments, laid bare a deeply rooted, latent antisemitism that was ready to burst into the open. The inexorably worsening global conflict and the victories of Nazi Germany aroused Catholic right-wing circles, already highly active before the war, and prompted them to find a common language despite organizational and leadership factionalism. Similar to anti-liberalism and anti-communism, antisemitism became a bonding factor, sustained by a shared cultural mentality. Numerous clergy joined forces with the nationalist Catholic circles.

Confirmation of reports about the mass murder of Jews in Europe did nothing to modify these deeply-rooted antisemitic views. The nationalists contended that the “part of the Jews in the chaos of contemporary Europe is too large and crucial to be concealed or downplayed.” Moreover, the supposed theological basis for Jew-hatred was widespread as a result of the influence of Catholic clergy like Father Julio Meinvielle, and were thus instrumental in the consolidation of modern antisemitism. Drawing on an ultra-conservative “spiritual” reading of history, the Catholic nationalists thought of the Jews that

Traditionally obedient to the vision that always leads them to destruction, the Jews plunged into the conquest of the material world and caused anarchy in the spiritual realm.⁷⁴

Mutual influences and interrelationships between antisemitic Catholic laymen connected to the Church apparatus, and fanatic, antisemitic Catholic nationalists operating outside the Church, were particularly evident in relation to the Jewish question. The latter were notable for their attempt to lend religious legitimacy to modern antisemitic doctrines. The portrayal of a “world Jewish conspiracy” certainly drew on a traditional Catholic outlook.

On December 16, 1942, as the Argentinean public became aware of the attempt to annihilate Europe’s Jews, V. Villanueva, a nationalist activist stated: “As I recall, in the holy books the Jews appear as a cruel, vengeful, and murderous people.” He went on to say that “the Jew stands at the center of existence as the principal enemy of humanity, a source of all the ills that lead to chaos....” and

The Jew is the cause of destruction of all regimes without distinction, even the most progressive ones.... Today we see him waging a struggle against Germany, which put him in power in 1917. Their inclination to chaos is inevitable.⁷⁵

The pro-Nazi press consistently blamed the Jews for the war, while making no secret of its hopes for the victory of the Axis powers in the world conflict. *Cabildo*, for example, paraded its pro-German sympathies even after the publication of reports about Nazi crimes. Citing “the clear voice of the *Führer*,” the paper maintained that those responsible for the war were “American plutocratic imperialism and the implementers of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁷⁶

The Alianza de la Juventud Nacionalista (Nationalist Youth Alliance), launched in 1937 as one of the most outspoken nationalist organizations of the pro-Nazi, antisemitic Right, became very influential from the 1940s onward, with a significant membership of Catholic activists. From 1938, the following slogans were a permanent feature at its demonstrations and meetings, such as on May 1: “Long live the motherland!” “Long live Jesus Christ!” “Argentina yes! Jews no!” “Death to the Jews!” The leader of the Alliance, Juan Queraltó, consistently upheld the myth of “international Jewish rule over the world” and the “insidious designs of Jewry.” Such views did not stop the pealing of the bells of the San Nicolás de Bari church as a token of solidarity with the demonstrators who marched past the edifice shouting antisemitic slogans.⁷⁷

Nationalist racial hatred was clearly expressed at the time of the meeting organized by the Jewish community in solidarity with the Jewish victims in

Europe, and in addition, there were repeated manifestations of hatred directed at Argentinean Jews.⁷⁸

Catholic Culture Courses activists were routinely involved in the activities of organizations closely associated with the nationalist movement. Dr. Héctor Sáenz y Quesada, a supporter of Nazi Germany and its policies toward the Jews, and a journalist on the nationalist organ *Nueva Política*, served as one of the principal speakers and organizers of the meetings “in favor of neutrality” staged by the Nationalist Youth Alliance at the Buenos Aires fairground on December 12, 1942. In his speech he underscored the link between neutrality and antisemitism. “Political parties and politicians are ready to serve the transnational and Judaizing plutocracy,” he warned.⁷⁹

The tragic reports from Europe not only failed to evoke any sign of Christian compassion and mercy, but actually intensified the nationalist Catholics’ hatred to the point of identification with the Nazis. Their circles quoted Goebbels as saying that the war “is [waged] for the sake and benefit of the Jews.”⁸⁰ They saw Hitler’s war as directed against the modern Western world, which, in their view, was dominated by the Jew.

This latent antisemitism burst into public discourse on almost any pretext. For example, on the December 2, 1942, the Day of Mourning declared by the Jewish community, the nationalist press of every stripe referred to the event in derisive terms, with *Cabildo* pointing out that “as every year on the day of Yom Kippur, the power achieved by Jewish trade and industry is seen once more.”⁸¹ Similarly, every political event or activity on behalf of the Allies provoked fresh antisemitic statements. The meeting organized by liberal movements in Luna Park in December 1942, for example, served as an occasion to underscore the close links between communism, Judaism, and anti-totalitarianism: “This anti-totalitarian meeting turned out to be, in fact, a communist event,” *Cabildo* declared.⁸²

The incorporation of religious motifs from the origins of Christianity, such as the popular image of Judas Iscariot, was instrumental in equating the Jews of that time with “the treacherous Jews of our times—the merchants and swindlers.”⁸³

Cabildo, in an article entitled “Semitism and Antisemitism,” stated:

We are not struggling against the Jews because they are Jews, but because of the Semitism of the Jews who try to build a nation within a nation, and against their attempts to impose themselves on others. It is true that Semitism now poses a national threat.⁸⁴

Among Catholics active in the Nationalist Youth Alliance, the alleged link between “Jewish gold and the Freemasons” remained current even after 1945.

* * *

Thus we see that even after news about the slaughter of European Jews reached the country, the Argentinean Church followed the Vatican example and kept silent. With no guidelines from the Holy See, the intra-Catholic tensions that characterized the interaction among different streams within the Church became even more exacerbated. As the “Jewish question” became part of the public agenda and the facts about the mass murder became widely available, the latent antisemitism surfaced as anti-Jewish statements and publications. Numerous clergy were actively involved in promoting and instigating this process. Church antisemitism formed part of the deeply-rooted theological and ideological outlook that also assumed a political aspect.

In this climate, the Christian Democrats, who came from the ranks of both conservative and liberal elements, emerged as the only ones to draw on the traditions of compassion and humanitarian sensibility inherent in Christian teaching. This was manifest in their stance on the progress of the war and on the Jewish question. As there were no voices from within the Argentinean hierarchy to support the Allies and express solidarity with the Jews, the Christian Democrats publicized the few Catholic voices both within the Church establishment and of clergy outside of Argentina who spoke out against the extermination of the Jews.

Catholic figures with ties to the ecclesiastical establishment made both doctrinal and personal contributions to the nationalist movement in Argentina. The process of rapprochement between the Catholic radical Right and the philo-fascists during the Second World War furthered the growing impact of the philo-fascists and supporters of the Axis powers on official Catholic frameworks. The threat posed by Nazi Germany in general, and the mass murder of European Jewry in particular, were obfuscated by Argentinean Catholics, steeped as they were in their uncompromising anti-liberal and anti-communist outlook. This influenced the political stance taken towards the Allies during the war. As the Holocaust of European Jews continued, Argentinean clerics shaped and disseminated their radical antisemitic views without demur from the domestic Church leadership.⁸⁵

NOTES

1. On confirmation in the West of the mass murder of Jews see David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews, 1941–1945* (New York and Toronto: Pantheon Books, 1985), 70–71; on the news in Argentina see, for example, “Duelo hebreo,” *La Nación*, 2 Dec. 1942, 4; “En unión espiritual con sus hermanos perseguidos guardan duelo los judíos,” *Noticias Gráficas*, 2 Dec. 1942, 6.
2. *El Pueblo*, 10 Dec. 1942, 9.
3. “El dolor del Papa,” *El Pueblo*, 10 Dec. 1942, 9.
4. On the Vatican’s policy, see Saul Friedländer, *Pie XII et le III Reich* (Paris: Seuil, 1964); J. F. Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews During the Holocaust, 1939–1943* (New York: Ktav, 1980).
5. Luis Barrantes Molina, “Ante la cuestión judía,” *El Pueblo*, 7–8 Dec. 1942.
6. Ibid. This attitude in *El Pueblo* accords with the fact that in September 1942 the fanatically antisemitic priest Virgilio Filippo was given space in the paper’s Sunday supplement to write on the Jewish question: Virgilio Filippo, “La cuestión judía,” *Cátedra*, 20 Sept. 1942.
7. Franceschi used the argument that Jews were unwilling to become integrated into society and identify themselves with the Argentinean state.
8. Barrantes Molina, “Ante.”
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid. On postwar exposition of Christian doctrine, see J. Ratzinger, *Foi chrétienne hier et aujourd’hui* (Paris: n.p., 1976).
12. Barrantes Molina, “Ante.”
13. See the numerous articles by Barrantes Molina in *El Pueblo*, for example, “Sobre la propaganda protestante,” 30 Nov. 1942, 8; “La maldición sobre el liberalismo,” 12 Dec. 1942, 8.
14. “La absoluta imparcialidad del Papa,” *El Pueblo*, 15–16 Dec. 1942, 8.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. “Prominentes judíos hacen un pedido al señor Roosevelt,” *Los Principios*, 9 Dec. 1942, 1.
19. “Paro de protesta por la persecución de judíos,” *Los Principios*, 12 Dec. 1942.

20. "Pastoral Colectiva del venerable episcopado argentino," given on 15 Dec. 1942, *Revista Eclesiástica del Arzobispado de Buenos Aires* (Jan. 1942): 1–5 (hereafter, "Pastoral Colectiva"); "Pastoral Colectiva," *El Pueblo*, 15 Dec. 1942, 1–2; *Criterio*, no. 773 (Dec. 1942): 402–403; *ibid.*, no. 774 (Dec. 1942): 413–26.

21. "Pastoral Colectiva."

22. Carlos A. Floria y García Belsunce, *Historia de los argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Kapelusz, 1971). Documents of the period are quoted also in Mario Rapaport, *Aliados o neutrales? La Argentina frente a la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1988).

23. "Auto pastoral por la paz del mundo," *Criterio*, no. 792 (May 1943); *ibid.*, no. 778 (28 Nov. 1943): 92–93.

24. Editorial "El liberalismo, los extremismos y la Pastoral Colectiva," *El Pueblo*, 17 Dec. 1942, 8.

25. Basilio Serrano of Catholic Action crossed over to the antisemitic Alianza de la Juventud Nacionalista (Nationalist Youth Alliance), as did many other Catholics in the period, according to his testimony. I thank Dr. Floreal Forni for giving me access to the interview. See also Dr. Manuel Ordoñez, interview by Graciela Ben-Dror, Buenos Aires, 24 Apr. 1986 (hereafter, Ordoñez interview); he maintained that the "Cursos" served as centers of dissemination for Catholic antisemitism.

26. See *El Pueblo*'s attack following the publication of the pastoral letter by *La Nación*, *La Vanguardia*, *La Razón*, *Noticias Gráficas*, *Criterio*, and *El Diario*: "Reacciones ante la Pastoral Colectiva," *El Pueblo*, 21 Dec. 1942, 9.

27. "La humanidad está saturada del veneno de doctrinas falsas," *El Pueblo*, 25 Dec. 1942, 1.

28. "En esta nueva Navidad de guerra," *El Pueblo*, 25 Dec. 1942, 8; an attack against secularism, communism, and Protestantism: "Los católicos debemos estar alertas," *ibid.*, 14 Mar. 1943: "Inmigrados, Republicanos y Masonería," *ibid.*; on an attempt to draw an analogy between Freemasons and the synagogue as satanic institutions, see *ibid.*, 30 Apr. 1943, 9, "La inmigración necesaria," *ibid.*, 28 Apr. 1943, 8. The editor agrees that immigration should be encouraged, but selectively, favoring "Catholics" and "Latinos." See also Luis Barrantes Molina, "Cambios de la táctica liberal," *ibid.*, 3 June 1943, 6.

29. Mario Rapaport, *Aliados o neutrales*, 77–107, see also Gustavo Franceschi, "Hispanismo," *Criterio*, no. 845 (May 1944): 468; "El mensaje del Papa," *El Pueblo*, 27 Dec. 1942, 8: "Pío XII dio al mundo las bases para

una paz justa,” *ibid.*, 29 June 1943, 32; Pbro. J. B. Lertora, “El Padre Santo y los totalitarismos,” *ibid.*, 1 Jan. 1943, 9.

30. *Ibid.*; see also “Sobre la pastoral del episcopado argentino,” *Criterio*, no. 774 (Dec. 1942): 413–20; “El mensaje del Papa,” *El Pueblo*, 27 Dec. 1942, 8; Luis Barrantes Molina: “Decadencia de la fraternidad,” *ibid.*, 19 Oct. 1943, 8.

31. “Preocupa la persecución a los judíos,” *Los Principios*, 18 Dec. 1942.

32. “Eden habló sobre la denuncia de que Alemania proyecta exterminar a los judíos de Europa,” *El Pueblo*, 18 Dec. 1942, 3.

33. Jacques Peirier Lacroix, “Carta de París, versiones infundadas,” *El Pueblo*, 25 Dec. 1942, 4; Werner Gross, “Carta de Berlín, Bombardeo de objetivos civiles,” *ibid.*, 6 June 1943, 3.

34. *El Pueblo*, 25 Dec. 1942, 4.

35. Luis Barrantes Molina, “Diversas formas del ateísmo,” *El Pueblo*, 12 Feb. 1943, 8.

36. “Un manifiesto firmado por intelectuales,” *El Pueblo*, 26–27 Dec. 1942, 9.

37. “La Iglesia y los israelitas,” *Los Principios*, 7 Jan. 1943, 4.

38. Jacques Maritain, “Porqué no somos racistas ni antisemitas,” *Los Principios*, 29 Oct. 1943, 5; 30 Oct. 1943; 31 Oct. 1943, 5.

39. *Orden Cristiano* (15 Jan. 1943).

40. *Ibid.* The statement by European Catholics living in the United States touched off a controversy surrounding the ideological and political dimensions of the issue, which appeared in both the liberal-conservative *La Prensa*, and *Criterio*, which attacked *El Pueblo* for lifting passages from the statement. *Criterio*, no. 774 (Dec. 1942): 417.

41. “Contra los católicos y la Jerarquía,” *Criterio*, 15 Jan. 1943, 12–13.

42. “Un documento de interés,” *Orden Cristiano*, 15 Feb. 1943: 18–19.

43. In Juan Carulla’s memoirs, he admits that his paper, *Bandera Argentina*, received assistance from the German embassy. Juan Carulla, *Al filo del Medio Siglo* (Buenos Aires: Huemul, 1964) Furthermore, *El Pampero* was known to be an organ for Nazi propaganda, as reported by the parliamentary Comisión Investigadora de Actividades anti-Argentinas (see chapter 3 of this volume).

44. Ordoñez interview.

45. “De la Carta Colectiva de los cardenales y obispos de Francia al Mariscal Pétain,” *Orden Cristiano*, 1 Nov. 1943, 11.

46. Cornelia Groussac, "Ante la crisis mundial," *Orden Cristiano*, 1 Feb. 1943, 7.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.; "Lo que dice *El Pueblo* sobre la situación de la Iglesia en el Reich," *Orden Cristiano* (1 Mar. 1943): 13; "Lo que publican las agencias católicas autorizadas por la Jerarquía argentina y estadounidense," *ibid.*, 13–14. Interestingly, *El Pueblo* published the reports on the persecution of the Church in Germany several months later. "Los nuevos ataques nazis contra la Iglesia han provocado la reacción del mundo católico," *El Pueblo*, 3 June 1943, 2; "La Iglesia y el 3er. Reich," *ibid.*, 21–22 June 1943, 9.
49. "Encumbre a masones y perseguidores de la Iglesia," *Orden Cristiano*, 15 Mar. 1943.
50. S. Schrijvers, "El antisemitismo," *Orden Cristiano*, 1 Mar. 1943, 5–6.
51. *Ibid.*, 5.
52. *Ibid.*, 6.
53. *Ibid.*
54. From the speech of Pius XI before Belgian pilgrims in 1929, quoted in *Orden Cristiano*, 15 July 1943, 6.
55. Schrijvers, "El antisemitismo," *Orden Cristiano*, 1 Mar. 1943, 6.
56. *Ibid.*, quotation from the text by the patriarch of Antioch, Msgr. Ardia.
57. Cardinal Hinsley, "La voz del Episcopado," *Orden Cristiano*, 1 Apr. 1943, 13 (the speech was delivered in October 1942); see also "Desvirtuando calumnias contra el cardenal Hinsley," *Criteria*, no. 795 (May 1943): 92–93.
58. José María Caro, Archbishop of Santiago de Chile to Abraham Drapkin, Present of the Zionist Federation of Chile, 12 Feb. 1942, printed in *Orden Cristiano*, 1 Apr. 1943.
59. "Exterminio israelita," *Orden Cristiano*, 15 July 1943, 19.
60. R. P. Bernardino de Echeverría, "Actitud de los católicos ante los triunfos rusos," *Orden Cristiano*, 5 May 1943, 2–6.
61. *Ibid.*, 2
62. R. P. Luis G. Brasesco, "Salmo doliente para Israel," *Orden Cristiano*, 15 May 1943, 8.
63. *Ibid.*, 5. On Cardinal Hinsley see *Orden Cristiano*, 1 Apr. 1943, 13.
64. Groussac, "Ante," 7–8.
65. "La Santa Sede y la guerra," *Noticias Católicas*, Washington D.C. *Boletín Oficial del ACA*, no. 253 (May 1943): 283–84.
66. On the nationalist movement, see the following: Marysa Navarro Gerassi, *Los Nacionalistas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Álvarez, 1969);

Enrique Zuleta Alvarez, *El Nacionalismo argentino* (Buenos Aires: Itinerarium, 1975); David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993); Christian Buchrucker, *Nacionalismo y Peronismo. La Argentina en la crisis ideológica mundial (1927–1955)* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1987); on the admission of Jewish children into Argentina see Haim Avni, *Historia de la inmigración judía a la Argentina (1810–1950)* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: AMIA—Magnes Press, 1983); “La despoblación de nuestro país, pero no importa: vienen judíos,” *La Voz del Plata*, no. 26, (2 Dec. 1942): 2.

67. “Vendrán mil niños hebreos,” *El Pampero*, 27 Nov., 1942.
68. “Mil grandes judíos para dominar a nuestros hijos, no los queremos, son nocivos y nos oponemos a que vengan,” *Crisol*, 28 Dec. 1942.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.* The slogan “Argentina yes! Jews no!” was openly proclaimed during Nationalist Movement demonstrations from May 1, 1938; see also “Potenciación,” *Crisol*, 29 Nov. 1942.
71. “Pobrecitos los niños judíos,” *Bandera Argentina*, 1 Dec. 1943.
72. “Autorizó Poder Ejecutivo la entrada de mil niños internados en campos de concentración,” *El Pueblo*, 26 Nov. 1942; on the favorable liberal and left-wing press, see *Crítica*, 26 Nov. 1942; *La Prensa*, 27 Nov. 1942; *Argentina Libre*, 3 Dec. 1942; *El Diario*, 26 Nov. 1942; *La Hora*, 28 Nov. 1942, *Mundo Israelita*, 28 Nov. 1942; *Die Idische Zeitung*, 25 Nov. 1942; *Die Volkschtime*, 27 Nov. 1942; Leonardo Senkman, *Indice 1*, no. 2 (1989). See also Leonardo Senkman, *Argentina, la Segunda Guerra Mundial y los refugiados indeseables* (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1991).
73. Avni, *Historia de la inmigración*; Daniel Feierstein and Miguel Alberto Galante, “Percepciones de la Cancillería argentina ante las políticas anti-judías en Europa (1933–1945),” lecture presented at the VIII Congress of Latin America Jewish Studies: VIII Conferencia Internacional, LAJSA, México, 25 Nov. 1995.
74. “El terrorismo judío en la revolución rusa,” *La Voz del Plata*, 28 (16 Dec. 1942): 6.
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Cabildo*, 25 Dec. 1942; on *El Pampero* the pro-Nazi views of its editor Enrique Osés and his connections with the German embassy in Buenos Aires see, for example, David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 3–4.
77. “Discurso de Juan Queraltó,” *Combate* 61 (June 1939): 3–4.

78. “Poema Calumniansky,” *Crisol*, 17 Sept. 1942, 4; “El pueblo de Israel y sus doctores,” *Crisol*, 9 Sept. 1942, 3.
79. “Discurso de Héctor Sáenz y Quesada,” *Crisol*, 14 Oct. 1942, 7.
80. “El discurso de Goebbels,” *Crisol*, 23 Dec. 1942, 7; see also “Guerra por y para los judíos,” *ibid.*, 28 Nov. 1942, 3.
81. “El trabajo frente a la competencia desleal,” *Cabildo*, 3 Dec. 1942, 6.
82. “En el tinglado del Luna Park,” *Cabildo*, 9 Dec. 1942.
83. “La revolución triunfante,” *Cabildo*, 5 June 1943, 4.
84. “Semitismo y antisemitismo,” *Cabildo*, 18 Oct. 1943, 6–7.
85. On the Nationalist Movement, see Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*; on the Church and antisemitism, see Ben-Dror, *The Catholic Church*, primarily chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 10

The End of the War: Turning Point or Continuation?

THE HIERARCHY'S DELEGITIMIZATION OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS

Following the revolution of June 1943, a military junta—the GOU—ruled Argentina. The Catholic Church supported the coup, which in return upheld the interests of the Church and granted its activists important posts in the new regime. In a major demonstration of support, Argentinean Church leaders reversed their previous stance on important foreign policy issues. This was particularly evident after the government severed diplomatic relations with the Axis powers in January 1944, and in March declared war against the Axis.¹ The mainstream Catholic position was pragmatic, aimed at strengthening the regime, rather than being an essential change of attitude.

As we have seen, ideological and political clashes among the various groups had sharpened during the war years, and grew even more acerbic towards its end. Immediate political issues, arising from ideological, theological, and political controversies, drew Catholic youth from Catholic Action and the Courses in Catholic Culture into the arms of the militant and antisemitic nationalists, despite the fact that the two organizations were for religious training and meant to be non-political.² In an effort to stem the flow of Catholic believers into the nationalist and fascist organizations, the Church published guidelines stating that Catholics were not obligated to be politically active, and ruled that Catholic symbols should not be used by political organizations.³ In spite of such efforts, it was obvious that an increasingly Catholic component made up these groups.

It was difficult for the Church leaders to stifle the expressions of what they termed “excessive nationalism” and “racism” that were more and more evident among the Catholic public. But the leadership did have tools to control the behavior of the priests. In October 1944, Cardinal Copello of Buenos Aires banned ceremonies in any way connected with the war without

his prior consent. He warned that priests, heads of churches, and abbots who disregarded this ban would be severely punished or even dismissed from their posts.⁴

Is it possible that this was a direct continuation of an order issued to the clergy in 1942 not to speak at activities organized by *Acción Argentina*, which supported the Allies? Among the Catholic faithful, the archbishop alone was entitled to evaluate controversial secular issues and direct the faithful and clergy concerning them. The desire to safeguard the unity of the Catholic community in times of uncertainty, particularly in face of the upheavals expected to follow the end of the war, gained ascendancy in determining Church policy. This dynamic policy was based on prudent leadership and avoidance of adherence to one or other side to the conflict.

There were some exceptions to this responsible and cautious policy. For example, Father Joaquín Elizalde, a supporter of the Allies, was banned from conducting prayers or delivering sermons in the Buenos Aires diocese. Copello's censure of Father Elizalde may reflect his own views, or perhaps Copello himself was being pressured. Certainly, extreme nationalists among the clergy like Julio Meinvielle and Leonardo Castellani, who continued to hope for an Axis victory, had heaped ridicule on Elizalde.⁵ We do know that the cardinal was known to attend the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Belgrano, where Virgilio Filippo officiated in December 1944 at a ceremony in Copello's honor that included the reading of a poem by one of the most virulent antisemitic priests in the country. So, while an effort was made to restrain lay Catholic activists by frequent repetition of Church rules in order to prevent the identification of Catholicism with "excessive nationalism," there also existed a lenient attitude toward the extreme nationalist and fanatically antisemitic priests, who experienced no public reprimands, evidence of the anti-liberal ideological and political approach of the Church establishment in Buenos Aires.

The tolerance shown by Copello to antisemitic priests such as Virgilio Filippo and Julio Meinvielle becomes more striking when compared with his attitude toward Catholic Christian Democrats. In November, 1944 the See of Buenos Aires officially pointed out that the Christian Democrat periodical, *Orden Cristiano*, had not received Church approval and that its sub-heading "A Catholic periodical" was inaccurate.⁶ From the issue of November 15, 1944, the editors changed the subtitle to "A Catholic-inspired periodical."

Apart from maintaining some sort of equilibrium between the two rival sectors within the Catholic community, the Church hierarchy continued to act

according to its well-worn conservatism. There was no place for Western-style democracy in the philosophy of Argentinean Catholicism. Terms such as “democracy” and “liberalism” were still perceived as synonymous. During most of the war, the Christian Democrats had been tolerated as a fringe group; towards its end, its leading members were ostracized by the Catholic community.⁷ In Julio Meinvielle’s publications, he referred to their journal as the “ex-revista Católica” (ex-Catholic periodical), as did the Jesuits of Córdoba, whose own fanatically antisemitic periodical bore the sub-heading “A militant Catholic weekly.”⁸ This subtitle was never criticized, nor were the journal’s writers limited in their freedom of expression as the Christian Democrats were, either because the Jesuits of Córdoba had no ideological differences with the hierarchy, or for pragmatic reasons; or perhaps the circumstances were dictated from the highest level. In any event, the position adopted by Copello perfectly matched the stand and expectations of the most extreme Catholics.

Orden Cristiano had enjoyed three years of publication without being pressured by the Church leadership. Several factors led to the Cardinal’s decision to crack down on the paper. First of all, by late 1944, Catholic public opinion was being influenced by the collective social mentality. In foreign affairs, the Church adhered to the cautious line adopted by the Vatican on the war. Regarding internal matters in Argentina, the Church fully supported the decisions of the military government. And in the organizational sphere, the bishops aimed at central control of the entire Catholic flock.

Occasionally internal contradictions arose between these policies, and these intensified as the war moved towards its end, but the power of the Church to intervene or ignore, to delimit permitted or forbidden areas, remained valid. The willingness or unwillingness of the hierarchy to impose its will on the lower clergy and the Catholic press was contingent on the dominant mentality within the circles surrounding the hierarchy, particularly in the absence of clear directives from the Vatican on the Jewish issue.⁹

THE POPE, “DEMOCRACY,” AND ITS MEANING FOR ARGENTINEAN CATHOLICS

In his Christmas Eve speech of 1944, the pope gave legitimization to democratic regimes, expressing a change in policy to follow an Allied victory in the war. Argentinean Church spokesmen interpreted the pope’s words thus: “Democracy must be Christianized in order to overcome demagogic”;

yet it did not ignore the far-reaching consequences of the pope's speech, which opened a new channel for Church integration among the victorious Western powers in the face of victorious communism in the East.¹⁰

This was the finest hour for the Christian Democrats, who thereafter settled accounts incisively with the extreme nationalist Catholics and with those who had voiced the opinions of the Church hierarchy. The advance and victory of the Allies, the retreat of the Germans, and the growing awareness of the enormity of Third Reich war crimes, gave impetus to a renewed thrust by Christian Democrats in support of their now-justified outlook. They tried, unsuccessfully, to force *El Pueblo*'s editor, Luis Barrantes Molina, to admit his errors in public. *Orden Cristiano* charged the Catholic nationalist sectors with assuming reactionary postures under the influence of Maurras, the dictators Mussolini and Franco, and expressing boundless support for Pétain.¹¹

Julio Meinvielle continued to describe democracy as the domination of the state by "the masses." For him, communism and democracy were merely two sides of the same coin. Anyone who sought to rule the world "by revolutionary means," whether a Bolshevik or a North American materialist democrat, he called the "Antichrist," the incarnation of Satan. Meinvielle claimed that the pope's speech intended to express his disinterest in the political regimes that nations chose for themselves. Therefore, he did not oppose democracy, and even saw a measure of importance in "the participation of the people in its regime." But as democracy spread, it became more important that the influence of the Church should grow too, and become universal. Governments, Meinvielle insisted, should accept papal teaching, which had condemned modern errors and laid the foundation for the "City of God"—a reference to St. Augustine's classic work. In other words, "if the world does not wish to become of Moscow, it must perforce accept the spiritual discipline of Rome."¹² Meinvielle saw Rome as a supernatural spiritual center; only the Church could provide the moral basis for government and society.

CATHOLIC INTELLECTUALS AND CLERGY: THE CONTINUITY OF ANTISEMITISM

The closing phases of the war witnessed intellectual turbulence in Argentina. The "politique d'abord" (politics above all) of Charles Maurras and the European Right continued to influence lay Catholic circles. Argentinean

Catholics were active in political organizations and the Church leadership were alarmed at the prospect of the masses demanding to participate in modern political and social frameworks based on ideas that had been condemned by recent popes. Nationalist Catholics were divided. Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, editor of *Nueva Política*, for example, called fascism “the purest political event of our times,” and saw fascist political activity as the correct way of bringing the masses into the framework of modern, organic politics, as an alternative to liberalism and Marxism.¹³

On this issue there was a public debate with Father Meinvielle and his circle, who despite the impact of international political events, continued to stress that the orthodox anti-modern Catholic approach was the expression of “true civilization.” Discovery of the power inherent in political activity was the center of an internal Catholic discussion about the best way in which to “defeat liberalism, communism, secularism, freemasonry,” and to limit “the influence of Judaism and Capitalism, whose spirit threatens from the Protestant North.”

Some Catholic lay people believed that political activity was essential for nations like Argentina. Such nations “have the place and the future, time and space in America,” but even these circles in principle excluded the possibility of freedom of religion and conscience. Many considered it extremely important that Catholics should occupy key positions in the existing regime, among them the foremost “Hispanists” Mario Amadeo and Juan Carlos Goyeneche, both of whom were sympathetic to fascist regimes and displayed antisemitic tendencies.¹⁴ Aware of the imminent defeat of Germany by the Allies, Argentineans pragmatically concurred with their government when it declared war on Germany on March 27, 1945. In view of the events of 1945, the nationalist Catholics believed that there was no longer any point in their struggle to maintain Argentina’s neutrality, “considering the fact that Argentina has declared war on Germany and the new reality after the expected victory of the Allies.”¹⁵

Julio Meinvielle, Leonardo Castellani, and others among nationalist Catholic sympathizers with fascist regimes, were deeply disappointed by the Allied victory. As early as the Allied landing in Normandy in June 1944, Meinvielle foresaw the “catastrophe” facing Christianity as a result of the German defeat. At the end of March 1945 Meinvielle still insisted that “in the same way as paganism expresses disloyalty to the true God, so Judaism is a betrayal of Jesus Christ. Not only did the Jews reject him, but transformed him into a determined and total enemy.”¹⁶ The eight years that had elapsed

from the writing of his book *El Judío* in 1937 to the end of the war in 1945 had not altered his position in the slightest. In 1945, as in 1937, he portrayed the Jews as a nation whose destiny was to cause not only the “de-Christianization” but the “anti-Christianization” of humankind. Meinvielle borrowed terms from the racist antisemitic lexicon, which included the Nazi conception of “blood,” “race,” and “hatred,” as characteristics of the Jews:

Hence nature imprinted on the blood of this race, which is nothing else but hatred of Jesus Christ, who himself was a Jew. The Jews see themselves as the standard-bearers of Messianism, whose aim is to combat Jesus Christ, with the aid of all the nations on earth.¹⁷

Thus, the Jews were more dangerous than other non-Christians, for the latter acted in the “natural” sphere, whereas the Jews had a “supernatural” and “universal” role. Because of their “theological instinct,” the Jewish people did not serve the Church and God, but chose to put themselves at the service of the “Antichrist,” Satan. In Meinvielle’s opinion, even the Catholics of France who supported democracy and liberalism proved themselves to be “among the legitimate heirs of Jewish anti-Christianity.... This was a tactic of the great Satan, impersonating the Angel of Light.”¹⁸

Dismay at the coming Allied victory seemed only to sharpen the antisemitism of the Catholic circles close to Meinvielle. The negative image of the Judaism as a danger to Christian civilization, since it was “a social and political philosophy,” was sufficiently powerful to mask the German genocide of the Jews, which Father Meinvielle ignored. The anti-Jewish stereotype was strong enough to cause the horrors of the Final Solution to fade into insignificance.¹⁹

Meinvielle’s hatred of the Jews was on three levels: that of early Christianity, of modern political antisemitism, and the racism which took “blood” as a divider between nations. St. Paul, he claimed, believed that a person who took the path of iniquity was led into suffering and shock, but the most serious situation was when the Jew took this path. Another argument culled from antisemitic literature was that “the Jews control the keys to the operation of the world through their control of finance, the press, and the masses.” The political antisemitic element was evident in the statement “Jewish totalitarianism is a necessary product of a people that is racist in character, an ancient people with a universal messianic ideal, a nation with a historical memory, a stiff-necked and untiring nation.”²⁰

The designation of the Jewish people as the personification of the Antichrist actually intensified towards the end of the war with the collapse of

Nazi Germany. Meinvielle's unswerving obsession with Jews and Judaism made its widespread influence felt for years after the war. It was taken up by his successors, members of Tacuara, the notorious militant antisemitic organization that was active in Argentina in the 1960s who physically attacked Jews after the Israeli kidnapping of Adolf Eichmann.²¹

THE HIERARCHY: THE ABSENCE OF REACTION TO ANTISEMITISM

One may well examine the attitude of the Church hierarchy to the continued publication of the views of the extreme antisemitic priests Virgilio Filippo, Julio Meinvielle, Leonardo Castellani, and others. Just as importantly, we may ask how, after the war, Archbishop Copello of Buenos Aires and the Catholic Church establishment reacted to the growing awareness of the mass murder of Jews in Europe.

In semi-official publications, spokesmen for the Buenos Aires diocese unreservedly welcomed the end of the war. *El Pueblo* greeted "peace in Europe" in an editorial, as did Gustavo Franceschi in *Criteria*. Bishop Antonio Caggiano of Rosario pledged to pray for "a true peace." A ceremony of thanksgiving for was held in Buenos Aires cathedral, attended by the president of the state, General Farrel, members of the government such as General Juan D. Perón, and others, as well as cabinet ministers, judges, senior army and naval officers, foreign envoys, and many invited dignitaries.

In February 1945, a conference of foreign ministers of the American continent had been held at Chapultepec Palace in Mexico City, at which they signed an accord for peacetime. Argentina, not having yet declared war on the Axis powers, was excluded from that meeting. The country's international reconciliation began during preparations for the San Francisco Conference to take place in March 1945—the founding session of the United Nations Organization. To be invited as a participant there, Argentina was obliged to sign the Chapultepec agreements, thereby acceding to the American political consensus and undertaking to declare war on Germany. In view of this, Church spokesmen stressed Argentina's desire to join the family of victorious nations at the end of the war.

The Church's pragmatism in backing of the military government was among the factors which eased the change in the government's international political orientation. The expected victory for the Western democracies as the war came to an end, and the increasing strength of the Soviet Union continued to cause anxiety in the Church about what it saw as a real threat

from “demagogic in Democracy and Communism.” The solution for the Catholics was the “Argentinization of Argentina” culturally as well as politically.²²

The change in the Catholic international outlook had no effect on the Church’s attitude to Judaism, although its spokesmen deemed it necessary to disavow antisemitism publicly. They exploited a statement by David Grossman, the DAIA representative, who told journalists in San Francisco, “I come from a country in which the Jews live in freedom. We have no difficulties with oppression or discrimination of any kind; and since we live in a situation of tranquility, we must help our brethren, who are not as fortunate.”²³

The true situation—with endless appeals by the Jewish umbrella organization to the Argentinean authorities over restrictions and growing antisemitism—belie Grossman’s words. True, as against the violent antisemitism in many other countries, the Nazi crimes, and the condition of the refugees after the war, the position of the Jews in Argentina was reasonable. Jews were roughly 1% of the population and were at this time not completely integrated. Public statements of the DAIA leaders emphasized that the Jews of Argentina were well-treated, but their internal meetings and discussions reflected a continuing sense of insecurity. Despite official steps to obstruct the Jews, it is true that there were no cases of violent or organized attacks during those years. The last pogrom had been in 1919, and since then the government had not initiated any active antisemitic measures. This is apparently what Grossman meant, as part of the efforts of the DAIA to aid Holocaust survivors. Correspondents of the Catholic press pounced upon such statements, and boasted that there was no antisemitism in Argentina.

But as we have seen, the about-face in internal and foreign policy was not accompanied by any real change in the attitude of the Church hierarchy or their spokesmen to the Jews. Not a single article appeared in the Catholic press at the end of the war or subsequently expressing sympathy or compassion for the Jews, or regret for the genocide; nothing was said, or hinted, about the need to help the survivors; no humanitarian gesture towards the Jews was suggested.²⁴ Virgilio Filippo continued to write in *El Pueblo*, his books continued to be recommended by the Church, and he continued to receive approval (*nihil obstat* and *imprimatur*) from Church censors. The status of the antisemitic clergy remained unchanged. The writings of Julio Meinvielle and Leonardo Castellani were accepted by the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, who nevertheless continued to minimize any link between the

Christian Democrats and the official Church. He did not publicly reject antisemitic priests who continued to officiate, sometimes even in the higher echelons of government, such as Father Hernán Benítez, an extreme antisemite.²⁵ Lay journalists and commentators were rarely censured by Church officials, and anti-Jewish journalists such as Luis Barrantes Molina of *El Pueblo* (edited by José Luis Sanguinetti) expressed opinions common to Church officials as well as to many of their readers.²⁶

Although information about the mass murder of the Jews of Europe had begun to trickle into Argentina as early as November 1942, its scale was only revealed at the end of the war. Yet the variety of negative attitudes to the Jews in the Argentinean Church remained as before, couched in intellectual, populist, theological, or modern terms, reserved or vociferous.²⁷ At times the character of the response altered, and the Christian Democrats, for their part, continued to express sympathy for the Jewish victims and ferociously attacked Nazism and Catholics who had identified with it. A mass in memory of the Jewish victims in Europe was held by the Democratic Union at the Church of the Sacred Heart in Córdoba on March 22, 1945, in conjunction with the declaration of a day of mourning in the Jewish community. Francisco Valentín, the bishop of Corrientes, conducted a similar mass.²⁸

Catholic nationalists like Meinvielle and Castellani rejected “the idols of Democracy and Freedom,” and even saw the hand of the “Antichrist” in the memorial service for U.S. President Roosevelt, which was conducted by Bishop Miguel de Andrea at the Church of San Miguel.²⁹ They looked to the theories of Werner Sombart to “prove” that Protestantism—particularly in America—had a Jewish hue. For Meinvielle, writing in his monthly *Nuestro Tiempo*, the Allied victory in the Second World War was equivalent to “walking into slavery.”³⁰ Alberto Ezcurra Medrano, a leading Catholic intellectual who also appeared in Meinvielle’s journal, saw Judaism as the “basis of Americanism,” and Roosevelt as “an American of Jewish extraction.” Consequently, “Judaism comprised the Kingdom of Satan disguised as a humanitarian religion.” Ezcurra Medrano concluded that Judaism was the religion of the “Antichrist” trying “to seduce Catholics through Satan.”³¹

In sum, up to the end of World War II, the Argentinean hierarchy continued to tolerate antisemitic intellectuals and priests, an attitude that is even more striking when compared to the attitude shown toward the Catholic Christian Democrats. Catholic nationalists who sharply rejected liberalism, democracy, and of course, communism, were also anti-American, and were

vocal in their criticism of Argentina's decision to sever relations with Germany at the end of the war. The Argentinean Church took no steps to delegitimize their insistence that Jews were the satanic antichrist behind the Allies victory.

NOTES

1. *REABA* (Oct. 1944): 698.
2. See the testimony of a Catholic layman, Basilio Serrano, interview by Oral History Project, *Sociedad y Religión*, Buenos Aires, 1986, headed by Dr. Floreal Forni. On the growth of Argentinean Catholic Action, see Graciela Ben-Dror, "The Catholic Church in Argentina and the Jewish People during the Holocaust Era, 1933–1945" (Ph.D. diss., Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993), 456.
3. See José Luiz de Imaz, *Promediando los cuarenta* (Buenos Aires: G.E. 1975).
4. *Crisol*, 4 May 1943; see also: *El Pueblo*, 2 May 1943; "Normas para los jóvenes del ACA", *Boletín ACA*, Nov. 1942; Dec. 1942; Jan. 1944; Oct. 1944; Nov. 1944. *REABA* (Oct. 1944): 669.
5. Father Joaquín Elizalde supported the Republicans against Franco during the Spanish Civil War and the Allies in the Second World War. Elizalde was a provincial priest of Ciudadela in Buenos Aires province, outside the city. L. Castellani, "Heli, sal de la Tierra," *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 28 (30 Mar. 1945).
6. *REABA* (Dec. 1944): 825. "Orden Cristiano no tiene aprobación eclesiástica usando indebidamente el subtítulo *Revista Católica*," *REABA* (Nov. 1944): 771.
7. E.g., Alberto Duhau, Rafael Pividal, Claudio Carbajal, Augusto Durelli, Father Bernadino de Echeverría, and Dr. Manuel Ordoñez. The nationalist layman Basilio Serrano, in his oral testimony, stated that Dr. Ordoñez devoutly clung to his membership and attendance at the Courses, but was almost ostracized. See: "Revista democrática de inspiración católica," *Orden Cristiano* (15 Nov. 1944); or, e.g., Augusto J. Durelli, "Mensaje al amigo liberal," *Orden Cristiano* (15 Feb. 1945); J. V. Ducattillon, O.P., "El catolicismo liberal," *Orden Cristiano* (1 Jan. 1945).
8. Cl. E., "Jugando con fuego," *Nuestro Tiempo* (1 Dec. 1944), which calls *Orden Cristiano* "the ex-Catholic journal."

9. Floreal Forni, “Catolicismo y Peronismo (I),” *Unidos*, no. 14 (Apr. 1987). Néstor Auza, *Aciertos y fracasos del catolicismo argentino*, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Docencia, 1989).
10. “Para evitar la demagogia, cristianizar la democracia,” *El Pueblo*, 14 Mar. 1945; “Grave peligro se cierne sobre nuestro país,” *El Pueblo*, 15 Mar. 1945. Pius XII, Christmas sermon, 1944, “Mensaje de Navidad de su Santidad Pío XII, *Orden Cristiano* (1 Jan. 1945); *Criterio*, no. 80 (1945): 39–42.
11. Alberto Vélez Funes, “Sembrando la confusión,” *Orden Cristiano* (1 Jan. 1945): 761–62, 737.
12. Julio Meinvielle, “Filosofía de la democracia,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 26 (16 Mar. 1945); idem, “La gran seducción,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 27 (23 Mar. 1945); Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, “Sociedad y sociedad política,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 27 (23 Mar. 1945).
13. Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, interviewed by Graciela Ben-Dror, Buenos Aires, 23 Aug. 1990.
14. Julio Meinvielle, “Concepto de civilización cristiana,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 31 (27 Apr. 1945); idem, “Sin Iglesia no puede haber verdadera civilización,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 30 (20 Apr. 1945); Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, “Sociedad y sociedad política,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 27 (23 Mar. 1945); Leonardo Castellani, S.J., “Anécdotas periodísticas,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 27 (23 Mar. 1945); see also Mario Amadeo, *Ayer, hoy y mañana* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Gure, 1956); Juan C. Goyeneche, *Ensayos, artículos, discursos* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Dictio, 1976), 159–72.
15. On the severing of diplomatic relations and declaration of war, see *El Pueblo*, 21 Jan. 1944; 28 Mar. 1945; “Ante el hecho,” editorial in *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 29 (6 Apr. 1945); “Cómo es la realidad,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 31 (27 Apr. 1945); Bishop José A. Podestá, in Oral Project, *Sociedad y Religión*, Buenos Aires, 1986.
16. J. Meinvielle, “Los dos pueblos del gran seductor,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 28 (30 Mar. 1945), 18–19.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. “Condición de la Iglesia respecto del estado,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 29 (6 Apr. 1945), 30–32.
20. J. Meinvielle, “Los dos pueblos,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 28 (30 Mar. 1945): 3.

21. According to the testimony of Gabriel Ruiz de los Llanos, *La Mala Fe* (Buenos Aires: Editorial del Amanecer, 1986); *El Antisemita* (Buenos Aires: Editorial del Amanecer, 1985).

22. "Paz en Europa," editorial, *El Pueblo*, 8 May 1945, 8; Antonio Caggiano, "Por una paz real y sincera, pide oraciones el obispo diocesano de Rosario," *El Pueblo*, 9 May 1945; 3 Mar. 1945, 9 Mar. 1945; 11 May 1945. "Grave peligro se cierne sobre nuestro país", editorial, *ibid.*, 15 March 1945, 8. "Argentinizar, también en la cultura, a la Argentina", *El Pueblo*, 10 Mar. 1945, 8, which continues to demand that posts in the civil service be filled with "Argentineans"; see also "Argentinos en las funciones directivas," *El Pueblo*, 23 June 1944, 8.

23. "Los judíos en la Argentina," *El Pueblo*, 9 May 1945.

24. Examination of the major publications of the Church hierarchy and statements by its spokesmen supports this conclusion; see *El Pueblo*, *Criterio*, REABA, *Boletín ACA*.

25. On Virgilio Filippo, see "Los falsos justos se creen Dioses ante el inocente," *El Pueblo*, 30 Mar. 1945; Gabriel Riesco, "Ensayos de perversión en capa de libertad," *El Pueblo*, 9 May 1945; G. Riesco, "La libertad y la religión," REABA (Dec. 1945): 704; L. Castellani, *Decíamos ayer* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1965); Hernán Benítez was Evita Perón's confessor until her death.

26. Luis Barrantes Molina, "Estragos que producen las guerras," *El Pueblo*, 10 Mar. 1945. See also Fortunato Mallimaci, "Catholicisme et état militaire en Argentine, 1930–1946" (Ph.D. diss., École des Hautes Études, Paris, 1988).

27. *Sol y Luna* as opposed to *Nuevo Orden*; e.g., Juan Carlos Goyeneche, *Ensayo, artículos, discursos* (Madrid: Ed. Dictio, 1945), 159–72. On Meinvielle and others as inspiration, see Goyeneche's lecture in 1948 at Escuela de Mandos, Sección Falange Española, *ibid.*, 75, 85. J. Meinvielle, "Los dos pueblos," *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 28 (30 Mar. 1945): 19. In contrast to the antisemitism of L. Castellani, "Sobrinas y política," *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 28 (30 Mar. 1945): 20–21; also Alberto Ezcurra Medrano, "La religión humanitaria," *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 35 (25 May 1945): 74–75. Virgilio Filippo, "Los falsos justos," *El Pueblo*, 30 Mar. 1945.

28. For Christian Democrats, see "Los católicos se adhieren al duelo por las víctimas judías." Adherence of Msgr. Francisco Valentín, Bishop of Corrientes, *Orden Cristiano* (15 Apr. 1945): 972; and *ibid.*, 971; see also "Sacerdotes en Dachau," *Orden Cristiano* (1 Oct. 1945).

29. “Le beatificación de Roosevelt,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 30 (20 Apr. 1945), 33. Santiago de Estrada, “Reflexiones sobre el Anticristo,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 32 (4 May 1945), 52, claims that the Antichrist will be “a Jew” and that “the people who murdered God will rule with him.”
30. “Respuesta a Aguirre Cámara,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 34 (18 May 1945), 67.
31. Alberto Ezcurra Medrano, “La religión humanitaria,” *Nuestro Tiempo*, no. 35 (25 May 1945), 74–75.

Summary

The Argentinean Catholic Church is an integral part of the Catholic world with a rich spiritual and theological tradition accumulated over centuries. This tradition includes patterns of thought and an approach to Jews and to Judaism based on interpretation of the New Testament and the philosophy of Church Fathers and medieval and modern Catholic theologians.

In appraising the approach to Jews and Judaism of the Argentinean Church at the time of the Holocaust, it is impossible to ignore the impact of domestic and world events. Catholic attitudes to the Jews were influenced by modern political-ideological factors in addition to the theological and doctrinal traditions of the Church. The combination of ancient and modern motifs created its own dynamic, leaving its mark on Argentina, whose outlook was in many ways a local and particular view of Jews.

Argentinean Catholic theologians of the 1930s wrote authoritative works on the teachings of the Church Fathers concerning the Jews. Julio Meinvielle, Leonardo Castellani, and Virgilio Filippo, as well as the popular writer Gustavo Martínez Zuviría (Hugo Wast), published their views in *Criterio*, the most prestigious Catholic intellectual weekly in Latin America, under the editorship of Msgr. Gustavo Franceschi. Many articles based on deep-rooted religious anti-Judaism and modern antisemitism were published in this journal during the 1930s and 1940s. The journal received a papal blessing on more than one occasion; it was the undisputed voice of the Argentinean church hierarchy. Some intellectuals, who formed an elite owing to their theological authority and charisma, elaborated a whole range of negative themes, and they became highly influential in Catholic and right-wing nationalistic circles. These negative Jewish stereotypes also appeared frequently among the lower clergy and in the religious education material of the catechism.

These were the circumstances for the encounter of the anti-Jewish religious Christian tradition and modern antisemitism in its radical rejection of the Jews. This union assumed special significance in the setting of

Argentina's domestic and global political developments. The Church was confronted worldwide by the multi-faceted challenges of modernity, which had resounded in Argentina since the second half of the 19th century. The Vatican response had appeared in the *Syllabus of Errors* of Pope Pius IX, published in 1864. The document contained a detailed list of what were perceived then as all the "modern errors," with special emphasis on liberalism, socialism, communism, rationalism, and secularization. Among the vast majority of Catholics today, the *Syllabus* has become controversial, but in the 1940s it was taken very seriously. The banned philosophies were potentially very attractive to the lower classes, and popes who followed Pius IX, began to address the concerns of the working class in encyclicals like *Rerum Novarum* (1891, Pope Leo XIII), and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931, Pope Pius XI).

At the beginning of the 20th century "Integral Catholicism," a conservative and intransigent wing of Catholicism developed, principally in France, on the basis of Church teaching propounded, among other writings, in the 1864 *Syllabus*. At the same time "Social Catholicism" made its appearance, grounded in the social encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and Pius XI. The two movements developed side by side, and despite their differences found points of agreement. In Argentina the combination emerged as "Integral Catholicism," according to which "Catholicism" was perceived not just as the true religion but as a comprehensive world outlook and a cultural alternative whereby culture, society, economy, politics, and morality would uncompromisingly meet the criteria of Catholic doctrine. Catholicism, patriotism, and "Argentinism" were thus aspects of a holistic outlook that was adopted between the two world wars and in the course of the second as the accepted philosophy of the hierarchy and lower clergy and lay Catholics. It suited the aims of the disparate trends that developed during the 1930s and the 1940s in Argentina. These were years of deep inner socio-political and cultural crisis—the "Infamous Decade"—a period that reflected the world crisis as well as the domestic.

The attitudes of the Argentinean Church to the Jews may also be understood as a factor of its adoption of world Catholic stances and its position on political developments at home and abroad. The Argentinean Church was strongly influenced by the intellectual and philosophical polarization of Europe, particularly in France and Spain, and its emergence was particularly noticeable in conjunction with the Spanish Civil War, the Nazi invasion of Poland, and the wider outbreak of the Second World War.

The Church's political stands found varied expression in internal Argentinean matters as well. The successful International Eucharistic Congress of 1934 was a turning point that changed the self-image of the Church, and revealed to the government the potential for drafting masses of Catholics for its programs. More than a million men (that is, potential voters; women were as yet unable to vote) participated in a public mass celebrated by Eugenio Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII). Following the Congress, the Church as an institution became an active partner in public and political life. The potential influence of the church increased as the legitimization of religion served to stabilize the government in a period of crisis and false democracy. The Church was much more visible in the public sphere, and government officials and politicians were more visible at Church events.

The attitude of the Church to the Jews in general and to the acute problems of the Jewish people during the era leading up to the Holocaust should be examined against the background of the dynamic interaction of the different aspects of the problem, and with attention to the questions posed in the introduction of this book. Research has revealed a constant escalation of antisemitism in the 1930s and 1940s, regardless of changes, crises, and upheavals in the sequence of events. As we have seen, the Church hierarchy adopted unequivocal positions on domestic and international political issues with the intention of influencing and formulating public opinion.

These stands were ideologically obvious, as the Church, in keeping with papal directives, denounced liberalism, communism, extreme nationalism, and racism. Jews and Judaism, on the other hand, received no mention at all, positive or negative, in the documents published by the Argentinean Church hierarchy from 1933 to 1945. This omission was not a sign of indifference. The hierarchy had ways other than official documents with which to deliver its messages. Its position on issues could be gathered from the unofficial and semi-official voices of groups, organizations, priests, and laymen belonging to the Church establishment. These voices expressed a wide array of opinions ranging from a radical use of antisemitic stereotypes, to benevolence and sympathy for the plight of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. These polarized views attest to different approaches to the Jewish question among Argentinean Catholics; they were clearly linked to political leanings in favor of the Allies or the Axis powers. The upper echelons of the Catholic Church accordingly chose to be neutral in the war, as an expression of their loyalty to the neutrality of the Argentinean government and their bond to the Vatican and its impartial stand.

The hostile perception of the “Jew” has to be seen in this ideological and political framework. He was the incarnation of the devil in the image of the Antichrist, presented as an enemy having many forms. For leading Catholic priests and intellectuals, all the enemies of Christianity in modern times—liberalism, democracy, freemasonry, modernism, socialism, communism, and the moral corruption attending them—materialized in the image of the “perfidious Jew,” the “Christ killers.” This message included the adoption of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or Henry Ford’s *The International Jew*, and other well-known books by writers of the radical Right such as Edouard Drumont, Werner Sombart, Maurice Barrès, Charles Maurras, and Ramiro de Maeztu, among others. In this way antisemitism, nurtured by events of the time, became an essential and integral part of the anti-modernist world outlook of the Argentinean Church.

Spread by priests and laymen, the motif of “Jewish control of the world” so as to destroy Christian civilization, added a layer of inner “logic” and “rationality” to the existing layers of religious anti-Judaism. It afforded a framework of continuity and the aura of total truth sought in modern times. The Jew, in the image of Judas as the symbol of rebellion against Jesus, was the same collective Jew in the modern era who rebelled against medieval Christianity by means of the French Revolution, and enjoyed the fruits of liberalism and anarchy, which led directly to the Bolshevik Revolution. Rothschild and Marx were but opposite sides of the same coin, their common aim being the destruction of Christianity and the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel in its stead. The modern racist rationale for antisemitism integrated with and reinforced its already solid foundations. The central place this message occupied among clergy and the laity who were part of the Catholic establishment was a decisive influential factor in Argentinean Catholic antisemitism.

The antisemitic priests and laymen who wrote books and articles were representative of the norm of Catholic thought of the time, not the exception. Only a small minority, those belonging to the conservative class and inclined toward the Christian Democrats, were influenced by Western democracy and the thought of Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain; they objected, for example, to defining the Spanish Civil War as a “holy war,” and sympathized with Allies in the Second World War. They were also influenced by British Cardinal Arthur Hinsley’s views during the war.

The mainstream of Argentinean Catholicism was both anti-racist and antisemitic. Moreover, the increasingly anti-racist positions appearing on the

pages of *El Pueblo* paralleled the escalation of traditional and modern antisemitic stereotypes. Consequently, not only did Christian anti-racist principles not suffice to counteract deep-rooted traditional prejudices against the Jews, the spread of Nazi propaganda against the Jews acted as a modern reinforcement for the existing traditional Jewish stereotypes. “Racism” was categorically condemned in a papal document of 1937 as being opposed to Christian principles. However, the “racism” that was censured in principle, did not necessarily encompass vilification of the Jews. The Catholic condemnation of racism did not lead to general disapproval of the Nazi regime, particularly as Germany was viewed as a spiritual ally in the fight against Bolshevism in the Soviet Union. The three great anti-Catholic enemies of that era, as Pius XI wrote in his March 1937 encyclical, were the atheist regime in Russia, Republican Spain, and the revolutionary government of Mexico.

This assumed a local aspect in Argentina. Judaism, of course, was not listed as one of the “modern errors” condemned by recent popes, but members of the lower clergy included it as such in articles and sermons, since many Jews were prominently associated with liberalism and communism. Accordingly, clergy in the province of Córdoba added Judaism to Pope Pius XI’s condemnation of atheistic communism in his 1937 encyclical, even though the pope himself did not condemn Judaism. He was actually sympathetic toward the Jews in their suffering, and in 1938 he prepared a document (not published as an encyclical) against antisemitism entitled *Humani Generis Unitas*. Within the sermons, speeches, and publications of mainstream Argentinean clergy, however, Jews were considered the initiators of everything that posed a political and spiritual threat to local and worldwide Catholicism in the despised democratic and Bolshevik regimes.¹

These views remained unchanged throughout almost all the period under discussion, although there were exceptions. The Salesian order (of importance because of its influence in Catholic education in Argentina), produced materials with marked anti-Jewish imagery in the 1930s, but began to reverse this in the early 1940s. There were also visible changes in the Catholic newspaper of the Córdoba diocese, *Los Principios*. This was not the case with the main Catholic daily in Buenos Aires, *El Pueblo*, which emphasized antisemitic stereotypes throughout the entire period. A place of honor in the newspaper was awarded to extreme antisemitic priests like Father Virgilio Filippo, and others less known for their antisemitism, such as

Father Gabriel Riesco, as well as to official commentators such as the layman Luis Barrantes Molina.

As we have seen, Jews were not mentioned in official Argentinean Church documents between 1933 and 1945. Jewish suffering was noted briefly for the first time in January 1945, together with Christian suffering, in a pastoral letter signed by all the Argentinean bishops, mainly directed against Protestantism in Argentina.² The Argentinean bishops did not react to the writings of lower clergy that accused Jews of host desecration, described them as “God killers,” made use of the blood libel, and associated them with anti-Catholic political movements, sometimes using racist language. The silence of the hierarchy appears to indicate silent agreement or indirect approval, at a time when the “Jewish Question” was a burning issue both inside and outside the establishment.

While priests were relatively free to express their views, Catholic laymen were not. “Deviations” by laymen whom the bishops considered dangerous were at once met with a clear warning and a reminder of what was forbidden by Church doctrine. Members of Catholic Action were not allowed to wear the movement’s badge at rallies of the Nationalist Youth Alliance—attending the rallies was actually forbidden as well. A more extreme example is the denial of legitimacy to the Christian Democrats, who were ordered not to use the sub-title “A Catholic Weekly” for their journal, *Orden Cristiano*.

Other causes, however, led to Church involvement with nationalistic groups. In educating a generation of laymen and future Catholic intellectuals in informal educational frameworks, the Church had unwittingly prepared the way for Catholic youth to turn to the political movements of the radical Right. When the Church hierarchy realized that its young members were participating in current political and militant action in nationalist frameworks outside the Church, it set out clear-cut restrictions against “extreme nationalism,” with the aim of maintaining control over the faithful. But active members who had received their doctrinal education in Catholic Action and at the Courses in Catholic Culture were simultaneously active in the various factions of the nationalist movement. From the viewpoint of the participants, the similarities between Catholics and nationalists were greater than the differences. In fact, they shared anti-liberalism, anti-communism, and antisemitism. The nationalists’ slogans “Long live Jesus Christ!” “Death to the Jews!” “Long live Hitler!” “Argentineans yes—Jews no!” that were loudly chanted at demonstrations of the Nationalist Youth Alliance were compatible with generally accepted ideas within the Church establishment.

In spite of Church teaching against racism, the Argentinean Church hierarchy lost control over many young people who had gone through its formal or informal educational system. The concepts they had absorbed were transmuted from religion into a kind of “political theology,” which enhanced political attitudes and actions with a religious dimension and an aura of absolute truth. Religious values were employed to justify political involvement.

In Argentina of the 1930s and 1940s antisemitism was spread by influential Catholic intellectuals, laymen, and priests, and was part of a consensus reflected in educational and religious Church material such as catechism books and parish newsletters. In such conditions Catholicism might easily have fostered violent antisemitism, but apparently there were sufficient restraints as a result of the teaching against racism and the hierarchy’s commitment to, to mitigate against this. The Church sought to curb potential violence through mandatory decrees stating what was forbidden to members of Catholic Action, including excessive nationalism and racism.

Nevertheless, the message regarding Jews was ambivalent. Although Germany’s “ghettoization,” “special laws,” “humiliation,” and “defensive rejection” did not appear to contradict Catholic doctrine (according to leading intellectual and influential Catholics), “physical murder” was rejected as incompatible with Christian theology. The overall image of the Jews as a threat to Christian society meant that they could not be seen as victims of persecution in Europe and at the same time as objects for Christian mercy and aid.

Thus, the potential power of the Argentinean Church to help rescue Jews by acting on their behalf with the policymakers to open the gates of Argentina to Jewish refugees from Europe, remained unexploited throughout the period. Argentina, located outside the arena of the war, had an advantage over other Latin American countries as a haven because of its proclaimed neutrality and its diplomatic relations with Germany, which it maintained until January 1944. But few groups lobbied for Jewish immigration, and the Catholic mainstream was not among them. The anti-Jewish message, together with the monolithic cultural approach of Integral Catholicism that rejected any kind of pluralism, demanded “selective immigration,” meaning “Latin” and “Catholic,” rejecting Jews as “undesirable” elements. The formation of a Catholic national identity, where “Argentinean” and “Catholic” were

synonymous with “patriotism,” left little room for Jews in this framework, and still less for them as refugees.

In sum, the attempts made after the military coup of 1943 to undermine the status of the Jews were apparently inspired by nationalist Catholic individuals who entered the political arena and obtained posts in the military government. They saw their dream of creating an alternative Catholic civilization, a “Catholic Argentina,” instead of the liberal secular one, coming true. After the coup, a series of decrees placing restrictions on the local Jewish community descended one after the next. It is hard to assess whether these measures were intended as only the beginning of a general trend against Jews in Argentina led by nationalist Catholic antisemites. The turning point in the war and the resignation from the government of some nationalist Catholic antisemites following the severing of relations with Germany in January 1944, along with the end of the war some months later, left these antisemitic restrictions an anecdote of the past. The Catholic presence in politics continued to make its impact on Argentinean society, yet generally antisemitism remained latent without the eruption of violence. The changes in postwar Argentina heralded a new era with new problems under Perón’s charismatic leadership. But antisemitism as a world view—which was consensual in mainstream Argentinean Catholic thought in the 1930s and 1940s—left its mark and shaped some influential sectors of Argentinean civil society and military frameworks, far beyond the limits of those times. The history of the military government that held power between 1976 and 1983—a period in which almost 2,000 Jews were among the “disappeared” victims of state terror—is evidence of the long-rooted antisemitism in Argentinean society.

NOTES

1. On the projected but unpublished encyclical, see George Passecq and Bernard Sachecky, *L’Encyclique Cachée de Pie XI: Une Occasion Manquée de l’Eglise Face à L’Antisémitisme* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1995), 219–310; Michael Marrus, “The Vatican on Racism and Antisemitism, 1938–1939: A New Look at a Might-Have-Been,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 11, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 378–95; Frank J. Coppa, “Pope Pius XI’s ‘Encyclical’ *Humani Generis Unitas* against Racism and Anti-Semitism and the Silence of Pope Pius XII,” *Journal of Church and State* 40, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 775–95.

2. “Carta Pastoral Colectiva del Episcopado Argentino sobre la propaganda Protestante” *REABA* (Feb. 1945): 65–83; the pastoral letter was read in churches on Jan. 25, 1945. See also Graciela Ben-Dror, “La Iglesia Católica Argentina y sus Posturas ante el Protestantismo y el Judaísmo, 1930–1945, *Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 2, nos. 9–10 (1999–2000): 373–94.

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